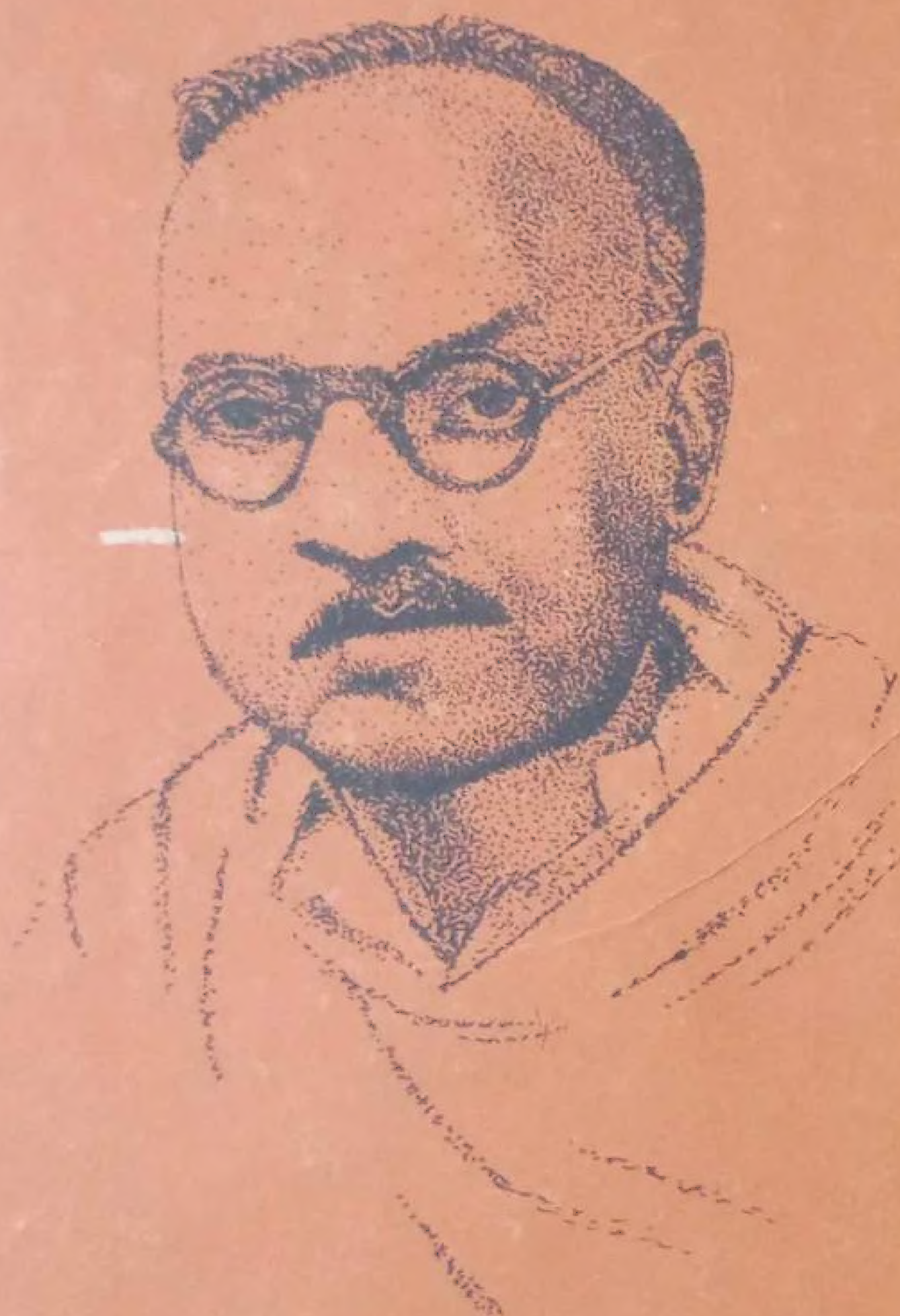


BANIKANTA KAKATI

THE MAN AND HIS WORKS



**COMPILED AND EDITED BY
TABU TAID
RANJIT DEV GOSWAMI**

PUBLICATION BOARD ASSAM

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/ RANJIT DEV GOSWAMI



PUBLICATION BOARD ASSAM
GUWAHATI-781 021

BANIKANTA KAKATI : THE MAN AND HIS WORKS is an anthology of articles on Dr. Banikanta Kakati and his achievements by various writers, compiled and edited by Tabu Taid and Ranjit Dev Goswami and published by Satish Bhattacharyya, Secretary, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, Assam, India.
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PREFACE

This volume—*Banikanta Kakati : The Man And His Works* is a collection of articles highlighting the different aspects of Dr. Kakati's qualities and achievements. Dr. Banikanta Kakati—the man who was known for his simplicity, and his works remarkable for indepth scholastic analysis—was a pioneer in more than one aspects in the field of Assamese language and literature. His treatise on the growth and development of the Assamese language once for all established the origin and identity of the language with distinctive features of its own. He was also a pioneer in setting a trend in literary criticism as well as in appreciation and evaluation of writings of the past.

Shri Tabu Taid and Shri Ranjit Dev Goswami have done a commendable job in compiling and editing this volume. Their painstaking effort have been ably rewarded by the response they received from many a distinguished writers. The contribution of two eminent Indologists Professor K. K. Handiqui and Professor S.K. Chatterjii have indeed enriched the volume. We would wish to put on record our thanks to Shri Taid and Shri Dev Goswami for their laudable effort to present a comprehensive assessment of Dr. Kakati, the man and his works.

We hope, this volume will help the readers—students and scholars in particular in appreciating the rare qualities of Dr. Kakati.

GUWAHATI.
February 1988

Satish Bhattacharyya
Secretary
Publication Board Assam

EDITORS' NOTE

"It augurs not too well for the Assamese society that twenty-five years should have elapsed after the death of Dr. Banikanta Kakati without any attempt at a comprehensive assessment of his contribution to Assamese scholarship. The omission appears all the more glaring, because attempts of the kind have already been made in respect of Dr. S. K. Bhuyan and Dr. B.K. Barua. It is, therefore, of urgent importance that we make a critical assessment of Dr. Kakati and his works....."

These were the words with which the editors first approached the contributors to this volume way back in early 1975. To our great encouragement, the latter responded positively, and fairly promptly, too. But, that it should see light so belatedly is a tale of publishers and publications, which is best left unrecounted, and, the benightment might well continue if the Publication Board Assam did not come to its rescue.

This, obviously, is not a book on hero worship. While its pages duly hold the mirror up to Dr. Banikanta Kakati's excellence as a man and a scholar, they also speak of the many inadequacies found in his works. In fact, several authors in this anthology have pointed out, with a fair degree of credibility, the limitations of his contributions to three disciplines, viz. linguistics, literary criticism and sociology. It has been held, for instance, that Kakati, in his zeal for establishing the identity of the Assamese language, often ignored its affinity to Bengali (Dr. D.P. Pattanayak) and that the treatment of Assamese phonology in *Assamese, its Formation and Development* suffers to some extent from lack of accuracy and consistency (Bisweswar Hazarika, Tabu Taid). Among those dealing with Kakati as a literary critic, Dr. Dilip Barua discusses the limitations of Kakati's Romantic aesthetics along with its strength, and Shri Hirendra Nath Dutta feels that Kakati failed to appreciate the new literary trends of his time, being guided essentially by critical norms of the nineteenth century. Similarly, Dr. Sivanath Barman, writing on Kakati's sociological work, is of the view that the latter failed to see fully the importance of material reality as the basis of religious beliefs and practices and stresses the need for an analysis of the prevalent socio-economic structure for a fuller understanding of such beliefs and practices. We are also told here that, as a man, Kakati

[ii]

had his 'moments of subjective judgment and objective fallibility' (Dr. B.K. Bhattacharyya) and that Kakati's thought, wherever its 'forward-looking links are missing', would strike one as being 'already outdated and obscurantist' (Dr. Hiren Gohain).

But, formidable and clear, the hero emerges through the pages of this volume. Apart from the glowing tributes paid by men like professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Professor Krishna Kanta Handique, the authors here have established, in no uncertain terms, the unique place that Kakati occupies, and will continue to occupy, in the history of Assamese scholarship. Banikanta Kakati was an exceptionally gifted man whose works embody—even apart from the nationalistic aspirations of the Assamese middle class of the early decades of this century—a mind tuned to a high degree of perfection. Although not very significant in the wider context, his brilliant performances at public examinations created a much-needed sense of confidence amongst the Assamese. With his scientific and historical study of the Assamese language, Kakati had achieved more than what many fellow Indian scholars, with the exception of a few including Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji, could hope to do for their own languages. He laid the foundation of Assamese literary criticism, and, by unfolding the literary treasures of the past, he was not only glorifying a culture but also cementing a sense of identity for the Assamese that he had already essayed to establish through his work in linguistics. In his sociological studies, Kakati showed exemplary scientific temperament by stemming the tendency to put Aryan masks on non-Aryan cultures. He had the profound erudition to marshal required data for his subject matter, the searching intellect to organise his material and draw conclusions logically and the power to express himself cogently. In short, he was what in common parlance would be called a genius—a man of rare originality and intellectual powers.

Yet this man was a perfect model of simplicity and silent endeavours. He lived very simply and thought ever so high like many a truly great man !

Most of the papers constituting the present volume were written in response to our specific requests during 1975. They thus express views held by the writers at that time. We, indeed, owe an apology to those who would have liked—after a lapse of over twelve years—to subject their papers to some amount of revision. At one time

we had seriously thought of approaching our contributors for any possible changes they would have liked to make in their manuscript-papers, but eventually dropped the idea as it would have led to further complications in matters of printing. The articles written by Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Professor P.C. Roy and Dr. Robert Shafer, as also the review of *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā* by Professor K.K. Handiqui, are culled from other sources and reproduced with necessary permission.

We would like to put on record our profound sense of gratitude to Professor K.K. Handiqui and Professor S.K. Chatterji who had encouraged us in our endeavour at the initial stage of planning of this anthology. While Professor Handiqui contributed a brief note on Kakati in spite of his failing health and later gave us permission to include his note on *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā* in this anthology, Professor Chatterji sent us his good wishes and wanted us to reproduce the first few paragraphs of his Banikanta Kakati Memorial Lecture (1953) which was later published as *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India* (1955). While we record with a sense of pride the association of these two eminent Indologists with our project, the fact that they are no longer with us pains us a great deal.

Many people have helped us in the preparation of this anthology. We would particularly like to thank Shri Ratnakanta Kakati, the youngest son of Dr. Banikanta Kakati, Professor Praphulladatta Goswami and all our contributors. Professor Goswami and Shri Kakati placed their relevant possessions at our disposal, which we could hardly have obtained from other sources. We owe all the invaluable letters (Cunningham, Bloch *et al*), now being published for the first time, to Shri Ratnakanta Kakati. Professor Maheswar Neog (who has favoured us with a comprehensive paper on Kakati and the bibliography of the latter's writings), Professor Upendranath Goswami and Professor Hiren Gohain have also tendered us valuable advice during all the years of the formation and development of this anthology. To all the generous men named above we owe a great deal more than could perhaps be acknowledged here.

Shri Devakanta Kakati and Shri Manoj Kakati, son and grand son respectively of Dr. Banikanta Kakati, have also placed us under an obligation by furnishing either some important pieces of in-

formation or documents for use in this anthology. Shri Jyoti Prakash Tamuli and Dr. Gobinda Prasad Sarma have also stood by us in our hour of need. We offer our sincere thanks to all of them.

We shall be failing in our duty if we, finally, do not place on record our indebtedness to the Publication Board Assam for shouldering the responsibility of publishing this anthology.

The reader will have noticed a few editorial lapses here and there which, given the circumstances of the production of this book, may have reached enormous proportions. The absence of an index might strike one as an obvious omission. These lapses have been due mainly to circumstances beyond our control. At this moment we can do nothing more than crave the reader's indulgence for all the lapses in this volume.

Guwahati
21 December, 1987.

Tabu Taid
Ranjit Dev Goswami

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THE CONTRIBUTORS



BANIKANTA KAKATI

Born : 15 November, 1894

Died : 15 November, 1952

PART I

Kakati : The Man and His Times

BANIKANTA KAKATI

TABLE OF DATES

- 1894 November 15. Born at Bāṭikurihā (Kharārbhiṭhā) village, Barpeta Sub-division, Kamrup, Assam. Parents : Lalitram Kakati & Lahobala Kakati. Early education at Bāṭikurihā Primary School.
- 1905 Admitted to Barpeta High School. Took to serious reading at the instance of his elder brother Paramananda Kakati, a teacher in the same school. Samuel Smiles' **Self Help** and a biography of Max Müller had great impact on him in his formative years, the latter inspiring him to take up the study of Sanskrit.
- 1911 Passed the Matriculation Examination, Calcutta University, occupying the first position among successful candidates of Assam which then included Sylhet as well. Admitted to Cotton College, Gauhati.
- 1913 Passed the Intermediate (Arts) Examination of Calcutta University, securing the first position. Admitted to Presidency College, Calcutta.
- 1915 Passed B.A. from the same University, securing a second class; awarded the Tawney Memorial Prize for securing the highest marks among candidates appearing from Presidency College.
- 1916 Married Kanaklata, daughter of Umakanta Das, Sheristadar, Barpeta.
- 1917 Failed to take the M.A. Examination for bad health.
- 1918 Passed the M. A. Examination, Calcutta University, being placed in the second class, English, Group A. Appointed Assistant Lecturer in English, Cotton College, in November.
- 1923 Passed the M.A. Examination, Calcutta University, being placed first in the first class in English, Group B. Awarded

the Kishore Mohon Chatterji Gold Medal for securing the highest aggregate marks among successful candidates of Groups A & B.

- 1924 A spell of illness that continued for about four years.
- 1935 Awarded Ph.D., Calcutta University, on the thesis—*Assamese : Its Formation & Development*.
- 1945 Appointed Senior Professor, English, Cotton College. Attended the Indian Historical Records Commission, XXII session, at Peshawar, N.W.F.P., as representative, Government of Assam.
- 1947 Appointed Principal, Cotton College.
- 1948 Elected a member, Executive Council, Gauhati University. Retirement from Cotton College and appointment as Professor & Head of the Department of Assamese, Gauhati University.
- 1949 Elected Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Gauhati University.
- 1952 September 17. Lost his wife.
- 1952 November 15, 5-50 a.m. Death at his Rehalsai residence. Survived by three sons and three daughters.

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purani asamar dharman dhārā, Śāntidūt (daily)

Miscellaneous articles (English) :

Assam through the ages, *The Assam Tribune*, Gauhati, 1949,
Independence Day Number.

Female initiative in courtship, *The Assam Tribune*, Gauhati, 1948
Independence Day Number.

Introduction to Bibliography of the works of Dr. S. K
Bhuyan, Gauhati 1951.

KAKATI : A TRIBUTE

It would have been a great pleasure to write my reminiscences of Dr. Banikanta Kakati, but circumstances compel me to confine myself to a brief tribute to his sacred memory. Among the many people whose cooperation and goodwill facilitated the speedy growth of Gauhati University, Dr. Kakati and Sri Sarat Kumar Datta were closely associated with me at the initial stage of the new institution. Apart from his scholarship, Dr. Kakati had a distinct personality that impressed his contemporaries old and young alike. He had strong likes and dislikes, and was called by many a cynic and pessimist, but I have never found a colleague more sympathetic and loyal and sincere in acting up to his principles. It was a happy idea to associate Dr. Kakati with the University as a teacher, and his work as Professor of Assamese and Dean of the faculty of Arts lent dignity to the academic status of the teaching departments. He was like an elder brother to me, and I gratefully remember that the congenial atmosphere in which he worked at the University contributed not a little to the happiness of the last years of his life.

K. K. Handiqui

18.5.75.

In memoriam : Banikanta Kakoti

Saniti Kumar Chatterji.

Banikanta Kakoti, whose sudden and untimely passing away at the comparatively early age of 58 in November 1952 we all mourn, was a scholar and educationist of whom not only Assam but the whole of India is proud, and he has a place in the front rank of linguists and investigators of history and culture who have added lustre to Indian scholarship of the present day. Because of his significant contributions, his name will always be held in respect along with his works wherever people take an interest in the languages and culture and religion in India. He did not attain to a hoary old age, and if he had joined the majority in the fulness of his years and after greater achievements which were promised by the works he has left, it would not have been a matter of such keen regret among his relations, friends, fellow-workers and admirers as this taking him away from the very useful sphere of work in which he was manifesting the full maturity of his mind and his powers, leaving hardly any one as distinguished as himself to carry on the work he had commenced, at least for some time to come, until capable successors come forward.

A quiet and serious student, a capable and efficient teacher, who could inspire his own students with enthusiasm for linguistic and literary pursuits, a sincere lover of the good and the true and the beautiful, Banikanta was the person to attract the love and admiring homage of all and sundry. His loss has been felt as much as a personal as a national one by all who had come to know him or to have even a slight contact with him. His easily understood popularity with his own students and colleagues and the people of Assam is fully borne out by the praiseworthy expedition with which arrangements have been made to perpetuate his memory in the University which he served and the good name of which for scholarship (although it is a very young institution as a University) he enhanced. And this is also for the credit of the people of Assam, too,—the promptitude with which they have come forward to honour one of the greatest sons of the State in a manner which is quite suitable to keep green the memory of the services he performed for his people and his country.

Banikanta Kakati I came to know for the first time nearly 32 years ago, when he was in Calcutta preparing for his M.A. examination in English in the University of Calcutta, in which he appeared in 1923 and stood first with a first class in the linguistic Group (B). He had already taken his M.A. in the literary group (A) in 1918. I had just then returned from Europe, after my three years' stay and study there, in November 1922, and so far as I remember, Banikanta was not a regular student in the few classes I still took in English (Old English and History of the English Language). But I have a vague recollection that he, like an occasional student in B Group like himself, would come to my house from time to time for help and guidance as a private candidate—which I generally gladly rendered if I found the student keen and industrious. This made me know him a little more intimately than most of my regular students whom I met only in the classroom, and I began to appreciate the steady qualities and the seriousness of Banikanta. After taking his M.A. in 1918 he had gone back to Assam, and he was appointed Professor of English in one of the premier colleges affiliated to the University of Calcutta—Cotton College of Gauhati in Assam. He would generally make it his business to see me when he would come to Calcutta in connection with his duties as an Examiner of English of the University. My *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* was published in 1926, and after that—I cannot remember when it was exactly—he gradually formed the idea of bringing out a similar work on the history of his own mother-tongue, Assamese. In a way, Banikanta and myself were similarly situated—both of us were drawn to do something for our mother-tongues impelled by the impetus we received from our study of the History of the English Language and Germanic Linguistics. I was very happy to find in him a fellow worker whose explanation of the problem of Assamese by the new light he could alone throw on the subject as an Assamese-speaker with proper linguistic equipment was bound to be of help for Bengali and Oriya, sister-languages of Assamese. Banikanta has made a generous reference to my interest in his work in the preface to his *Assamese : Its Formation and Development*. It was certainly a labour of love for me. When his thesis was first presented, the award of the doctorate was withheld as the other examiners (both of them no longer in the land of the living) were in my opinion a little too exacting, but Professor Jules Bloch of Paris, who was my guru, readily agreed on my request to assist Banikanta with his detailed criticisms and corrections; and this, as Banikanta himself gratefully acknowledged, certainly improved his book considerably. In 1935, the examiners were unanimous in award-

ding him the doctorate, but it was only in 1941 that his work could be published.

The total output of Banikanta's linguistic and literary work is not very extensive, but it is full of useful material and penetrating exposition. He wrote a short English work on Sankaradeva, the great apostle of Assam in the 15th-16th centuries, and two very valuable studies, *The Mother Goddess Kamakhya* (1948) and *Vismite Myths and Legends* (published posthumously in 1952), besides a few research articles in English, editions of early Assamese texts, and some articles in Assamese. These give no glimpses of the mind of the man, who was essentially one of "Sweetness and Light", a scholar who was, above all, rigidly intellectual in his approach to problems relating to history and culture (including religion) and at the same time possessed a deep vein of idealism and faith.

Such men are rare in any country or community. Assam and India were fortunate in having Banikanta Kakati with his strong intellect and high idealism, and it will be difficult to find any one in his sphere to take his place. But he has left, for the young scholars of Assam particularly, his shining example which his own works will never allow to grow dim; and so long as the Assamese language will live and will be studied, future generations will have to make their obeisance to the memory of the first great linguistic scholar of Assam who won the Assamese language for scientific linguistics.

My Reminiscences of Banikanta

P. C. Roy

Mind you ! He was and is Banikanta, neither Bani Kanta nor Banikantha. The latter I called him when he first dawned on my life. "Myself was young" then. He quietly but firmly corrected me. "What's the odds," I said. I was a bare twentyfive then and opinionated. "Sir," said he, "as you put it, I would have the gift of eloquence only. But as Banikanta, the beloved of the Muses, I would command all the fine arts." I stood, rather sat, in my professorial chair, corrected once for all by a chit of a lad, most unimpressive, nay even unprepossessing, hailing from Barpeta.

Incidentally, I resist the temptation to enter into the relative greatness or otherwise of Barpeta and Goalpara, over which raged a perpetual war in our Common Room between Srinath¹ and Radhakanta,² which Suresh Babu³, the philosophical observer, called "The Border Feud".

So also, when on his first appointment to the staff, I marked him "B.K.K." in the English Timetable, he taught me that it should be "B.K.", for the name made sense only when compounded, not disjointed. It was much later that the greatest Indian savant in Linguistics, Dr. Suniti Chatterji, made this same point in a learned contribution to a Bengali magazine.

In this and several ways, how much I learnt from him throughout our long contact, as so-called teacher and taught and later, as colleagues !

How I wander from the orthodox method of opening a thesis ! As a pedagogue, I have insisted that "Reminiscences" should mean "Collection in literary form of incidents that the person remembers". But, when sentiment is fired, literary dicta make their conge' and the thousand thoughts "that knock at the portal of my lips and would fain find utterance", jostle pell-mell, and "stand not upon the order of their going".

Peccavi, my old students ! I know I have erred, and will.

But what of that ? My darken'd ways
 Shall ring with music all the same ;
 To breathe my loss is more than fame,
 To utter love more sweet than praise.

It was 1911, if my memory plays not false, that at my first meeting of the Freshers, in the hall next the Post Office, since given over to the Historical and Antiquarian Society, I set a piece of dictation from the leader of the day's *Statesman*. One and only one paper showed an all correct answer. I asked the writer to stand up. Reluctantly, shyly, up stood a spare, dark lad wrapped in the conventional *endi*. When I asked him what school he hailed from, he mentioned Barpeta. I learnt since to respect the place as the nursery of athletes and sportsmen—Deven Uzir, Phani Pathak, Bhagawan ditto, "Apurba Doctor"⁴; but my first impression of it was as the home of brilliant students—Banikanta, Radhakanta, the Das Brothers—Chidananda, Sadananda⁵ etc.—their name is legion. How a procession of simple, tenacious, earnest young scholars marches past the screen of my old memory !

To return : I marked the paper the maximum 10, less 2 for illegible writing. Alack and alas ! It was a misfire, for illegible he remained to the end of his day. I kept the lad at the back of my mind as a promising colt requiring special handling.

The sturdy independence of his character was forced on my notice shortly after. Dr. P.K. Roy, Mr. Caldwell, and Mr. J.N. Das Gupta had come to inspect the college.⁶ It was Anundoram Borooah⁷ anniversary, and they were asked to a memorial meeting held on the verandah of a thatched hostel-building long since defunct. We had yet no college hall. Dr. P.K. Roy was presiding, and by him sat our distinguished guests and the staff, Mr. Sudmersen being Principal then. Banikanta had written the only paper of the day, and he had it vetted by me in advance. As Banikanta was not a good elocutionist, I had arranged for Kaliprosad⁸ to read it for him. For the Barua brothers spoke good English, and even much later, Ganga (is it ?)⁹ was my choice for recitations from Shakespeare. He made an impressive Brutus.

Well, the fireworks began when the paper recalled the incident of Mr. A.R. Borooah saying before some exalted English officer to one

of his homely visitors : "You need not leave your chair. I do as he is my official superior." Sudmersen started writhing in his chair. "Fairy tales ! A lot of legend. Pah !" Next came the story of Mr. Borooah flinging a drunken English fellow-passenger overboard when the latter tried to "get fresh" with an Assamese lady. Up jumped Sudmersen : "Dr. Roy, stop this impertinence. This cannot be allowed to go on." Kaliprosad looked at me whether to go on. I spoke to Dr. Roy, who happened to be my old Professor. He questioned Kaliprosad, who calmly replied that he was responsible only for the delivery. "Who wrote it ?" shouted Sudmersen, and echoed Caldwell. Forward came Banikanta, in his inevitable *endi chaddar*, and "You ?" yelled "old Sud". Said Dr. Roy : "Sudmersen, I am running this show, not you. Will you let me conduct the proceedings in my own way ?" Then he asked Kakati : "Are you sure of your facts ?" He said : "Certainly." I stood up and said : "Mr. President, I carefully censored the paper. I myself suspected these as legends, and referred to the great scholar Mr. Hem Chandra Goswami.¹⁰ He assured me they were not apocryphal, and showed me reports of the time in back numbers of *Jonaki*." Dr. Roy turned to Kaliprosad and coolly said : "Go on !" I am sure Kaliprosad and Ambika Borah¹¹, who was in charge of the entertainment, would corroborate me, if necessary.

And this same Sudmersen, when Banikanta topped the list in the I.A., came to me and said : "So, your Banny Kantuh has saved the situation !" For, in those palmy days of Cotton College, it was felt to be not good enough that the competition list should not contain at least three or four Cottonians, and that year this was the only First. What a college ! The Sadler Commission ranked it with St. Paul's as the best under Calcutta University.

Off went Banikanta to Calcutta, the Mecca of ambitious young scholars, for his Degree Examination. Burdened with a family, depending solely on his scholarship, uncouth and ill-dressed to sophisticated Cockney eyes, he could not do justice to himself. But he is still remembered as an earnest seeker after knowledge. When in 1930, my son joined the Eden Hindu Hostel as a Third Year student of Presidency College, the oldest factotum Banamali asked him where he hailed from. "Assam", said Jit. "O sir, there was one young man from Assam here long ago who worked harder than I have ever seen in my long career. He had a quaint name, Kakati, and whenever I got up at night, I found his lamp burning and him stooping over

big books." So, thus early, he forced a respectful homage to the earnest industry of young Assam, as later he forced a reluctant world to recognise the high place of his country's language. But of this, anon.

All this reading was stored up in his brain and memory, but few without the magic touch could have glimpses of it. I was lucky enough to be one such. It was when a bumptious man¹², who was put over our head in the English staff for a short time, was conducting a seminar of Honours and M.A. students. Nalini¹³. Bhabani Barua's late brother, one of the best students I can recall, was reading a paper on Keats. He had mentioned Keats' "facile felicity" or something similar. This young pedant who presided sneered: "It is a common remark with students of Indian Universities. But at Oxford, we do not admit it." No sooner did the class break up than B.K. dragged me to the library, and pulled out book after book from the shelves, and showed passages from great authorities supporting Nalini. I wondered how he knew exactly where to find the relevant books in that vast library, and the relevant passages there.

I recall another experience illustrating the same erudition. He took his M.A. from Cotton College,¹⁴ and I had to "teach" him for the Sixth Paper, viz. Special Paper on Elizabethan Drama. Any English student knows the vastness of the subject, and I knew the extent of Banikanta's reading. So, I worked hard to hunt out abstruse comments from obscure authors, not easily got at. Alas! Love's labour was lost! One day he quietly remarked that, in such and such issue of such and such literary review, a few of these opinions had been superseded.

Yet his large-heartedness! At the meeting to celebrate his obtaining Doctorate, he credited me with first directing his literary tastes. This was the blindness of love with a vengeance. His thesis was on linguistics, of which my knowledge is less than nil! Contrast a tribal Christian lad who, when he came as a fresher, was a most regular attendant at Sunday service. He suddenly left off churchgoing. When Dr. Thompson, himself a strict sabbatarian, asked him why, he said that I had dissuaded him. Dr. Thompson called for my explanation. I was relieved when the lad proceeded to explain that he had caught his love for Omar Khayyam from me, and "Old Khayyam" in turn had persuaded him to agnosticism. Dr. T. retailed the story at the English Club that evening, and for the first and last time I saw Mr. Bentinck¹⁵ "hold his sides with laughter."

I was pained to see that his potentialities as a teacher were not exploited by authority or student. Several factors contributed to this lack of recognition. His voice, low and husky, was not suited to addressing a large class. His scholarship, profound and abstruse, was "caviare to the general." Last but not least, his contempt for showmanship, so beloved of some of our colleagues whom I shall leave nameless, was mistaken for lack of knowledge. Had it been Oxford or Cambridge, his learning would have been utilized for the advancement of knowledge, heedless of examination results produced by efficient teachers. I am painfully cognizant that "Professor" was a misnomer for us who served and sometimes succeeded as coaches, helping the doubtful over the borderline, to raise the percentage of passes. But to the humble but earnest seeker after knowledge, the ambitious yet hesitant pupil, he was a perpetual inspiration, giving of his inexhaustible store. I recognise with gratitude the immense profit my own children derived from the largesse he bestowed unstinted on them, his left hand not knowing what his right gave. To the end, I myself sought and received his help in elucidating obscure classical references or involved Shakespearean or Browningite passages. Yet, he always began or ended up with "It is as you say, sir," little touches that bespoke Nature's own gentleman.

I now proceed to deal with him as a man, having sketched him, however perfunctorily, as a student and a teacher.

I bestowed on him the sobriquet of "Arch Cynic", usually applied to Thackeray. One of the leading advocates of Gauhati called him "P.P." or the Public Prosecutor. Like Bacon "He would not willingly abide a fool", nor a poseur or a hypocrite either. Chandranath Kalita¹⁶ has succinctly summed up this aspect of his character in the Golden Jubilee Book : "Simple and unostentatious, he is yet a terror to every fussy man, for with his penetrative intellect and pointed retort, he can at once flog the flippant or the fussy opponent to the ground." I was reputedly pugnacious too, but my attacks were with a bludgeon whilst his were rapier thrusts, not "heavy lathi charges," as Muhibulla described some of our combative group.

I recall one instance of such caustic humour. There was, perhaps still is, a certain citizen of Gauhati who was a double-barrelled public nuisance, in that he was not only a bore but also one of Charles Lamb's "Race of Borrowers." He would invariably cadge a small loan before he had done with you for the day. I was walking with

Kakati along the Strand one evening, when I saw the Lilliputian terror coming our way. "Let us cross over to the other side," I whispered to Kakati. "It is all right sir. Have no fear," he said. Lo and behold ! No sooner did the dwarf catch sight of B.K. than he hastily retraced his steps. This was "the boot on the other leg" with a vengeance ! "What is the magic you employed ?" I asked. "Very simple, sir. I lent him two rupees sometime back, and now he shuns me like a cobra." Machiavelli must have turned uneasily in his grave to see a son of Assam beat him at his own game ! I recall another instance. A flighty girl student used different dodges on different days to focus the attention of the boys when entering or leaving my class. I told B.K. casually I did not know what to do about it. Well, as ever, he helped me out. Shortly after, we were taking tutorial classes in adjoining rooms, the girl being in my group. He dismissed his a little before time, and waited at my door as though to speak to me when free. I did not smell a rat yet. I dismissed my class. The girl posed as though her sari had caught in a corner of a desk. Said B.K. in a stage whisper : "*Shakuntalā kar-techha nāki ? Anchāl kāntāy bendhe geche ?*"¹⁷ The belle of the college blushed scarlet and never ventured a repeat performance.

Verily could it be said of him :

On thee the loyal-hearted hung ?
The proud was half disarm'd of pride,⁸
Nor cared the serpent at thy side
To flicker with his double tongue.

What apparently dried up the well of geniality in him ? Myself I saw only superficial misanthropy in him. In Bengali idiom, he was like a coconut, dry and hard in the exterior but with sweet, thirst-quenching milk inside. How else to explain his charity, to the end of his days, to poor deserving students, his old-world courtesy, his humility ? He never smoked before me, though most of my old pupils, since colleagues, did not refuse my proffered cigarette case in the Common Room. When he was going to the Historical Records Congress, perhaps in 1943¹⁰, I met him at Lucknow railway station. He left his reserved compartment, and on a crowded platform took the dust of my feet, though I tried to dissuade him, as it embarrasses me. What prompted him to mention me as ultimately responsible for his thesis when this can by no sophistry be substantiated ?

As to his charity to poor students, "thereby hangs a tale." In his lean hostel days at Calcutta, two of his ex-teachers, the late Prof. Asutosh Chatterji being one, helped him with a monthly dole.

Years after, he brought along two packets of paper-money as repayment. To my knowledge they were declined as not having been meant as loan. To this he replied, "Sir, a Hindu cannot leave unpaid a *guru reen*" and looked profoundly distressed. He was told to repay it in any other shape he thought best. I can vouch for it that to the end of his days, he supported some poor students without declaring it from the house tops.

His condonation of the shortcomings of those he revered was generous to a fault. I recall someone describing me as intolerant and sharp-tongued. I kept silent as I knew the charge well-founded. Outspoke Banikanta : "Sir, some in this world must have the guts to challenge the wrong, heedless of self. Mr. Roy is one of that small band." No paid advocate could do better for a losing case. How he smoothed my oft-ruffled plumes ! He once asked me what books I was carrying back from a library. "Banikanta," said I, "there is no method in my madness. I read travel, shikar, biography, poetry, thrillers, *hoc genus omne*." Pat came the reply : "Sir, you therefore enjoy your reading. To my sort, everything read or to be read must be for a set purpose, and as such becomes labour not pleasure."

How they crowd the memory, Banikanta's ready retorts, so biting to the many, so soothing to me ! Only a few months back, writing to him for a favour I said : "Pardon me that I write only occasionally and that only for a favour." Like a clever lawyer for defence, he, though the injured, put my defence into my mouth. He ignored the "favour" part and pounced on the "occasional". "Sir," he replied, reporting that my request had been kept, "It is the privilege of the old to speak only when occasion demands, and that of the young to see that service is rendered to superiors." How few of the generations I have taught since would think or even speak in such terms !

Pax to this generous sophistry to soothe his old teacher. I am aware of the tendency of age to garrulity, and must check the flow of reminiscences. He had and has a place in my heart that can never be filled. The void left by his departure for "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller ever returneth" aches with a dull pain. Vain therefore the hope that "Words, words, words"

...Like weeds...will wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more,

Notes

(Professor P.C. Roy's reminiscences of Kakati appeared in *The Assam Tribune* dated 26.1.53, just a little more than two months after Kakati's death. As a teacher and, later, a colleague in the Department of English, Cotton College, Professor Roy was very close to Kakati. The reminiscences, meant to serve the needs of an occasion following Kakati's death, have recreated the man behind in intimate terms.

The following notes on the personalities and events mentioned by Professor Roy have been inserted by the editors in order to facilitate a better understanding of the times evoked.—Editors)

1. Srinath Chakravarty (1897—1954), Lecturer in Sanskrit, Cotton College (1923—1940), Professor of Sanskrit, M.C. College, Sylhet (now in Bangladesh), and subsequently an Assistant Director of Public Instruction, Assam, for Sanskrit education during 1940—49. He was Principal, Cotton College, during 1949—52.
2. Radhakanta Das, (1896—1983) served first as Lecturer and later, as Professor of Mathematics, Cotton College, during 1925—51.
3. Suresh Chandra Dutta, lecturer and subsequently Professor of logic and Philosophy, Cotton College, during 1910—39.
4. Sri Deven Uzir, Phani Pathak, Bhagawan Pathak and "Aporba Doctor", were eminent sportsmen of the time.
5. Apparently a mix-up. Sadananda Das, who rose to be a Government Pleader and Sri Chidananda Das, who retired a decade ago as Registrar, Gauhati University, both hail from Barpeta, but they do not come from the same family.
6. It appears that the time of their visit was January 1913, the year Cotton College was granted affiliation for B.A. Honours.
7. Anundoram Borooah (born North Gauhati, Assam, 1850—died Calcutta, 1889), an eminent Sanskritist, was a Barrister-at-Law of the Middle Temple and first Assamese member of the Indian Civil Service from 1872 till his premature death. His works, including *A Practical English-Sanskrit Dictionary* in three volumes (1877-1880) were widely acclaimed in international scholarly circles.
8. Kaliprasad Borooah, industrialist and businessman.

9. Gangaprasad Borooh, Kaliprasad Borooh's younger brother, later became a physician.

10. Hem Chandra Goswami (1872—1928), poet, journalist, compiler and editor of early Assamese manuscripts and Civil Servant. One of the pioneers of modern Assamese literature, Goswami edited *A Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts* (pub., Calcutta University) and restored to print the monumental Assamese lexicon *Hemkosha* (pub. Shillong, 1900) in collaboration with P.R.T. Gurdon.

Jonaki (launched 13 January, 1889), an Assamese monthly devoted to literature, was edited by Chandrakumar Agarwalla, with the active cooperation of Hem Chandra Goswami and Lakshminath Bezbaruah, among others.

11. Ambika Borah (1891—1968), eminent man of letters, sometime Lecturer in Assamese, Calcutta University, was the son of Satyanath Borah, one of the masters of modern Assamese prose literature.

12. P.G. Abraham, Professor and Head of the Department of English, Cotton College (1929—33).

13. Nalini Barua, elder brother of Sri Bhavani Barua, I.P.S. (Retired), died in the prime of youth.

14. Apparently a lapse of memory. Kakati took his M.A. from Calcutta and *not* from Cotton College, Gauhati. In 1917, Kakati failed to sit for the examination owing to bad health. It seems he took some coaching from his teacher at Gauhati for his M.A. examination the following year.

15. Bentinck, the then Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup, Assam.

16. Chandranath Kalita (1904—1983) served in the Department of English, Cotton College, from 1953 to 1962, first as Lecturer and, then, as Professor and Head of the Department.

His comments on Kakati appear on pp 105—6 in the Golden Jubilee Volume, Cotton College, 1951—52, published by Dr H.K. Barpujari, Secretary, editorial board, Jubilee Volume, Gauhati, 1952.

17. "Acting *Shakuntala* ? Have your loins been caught in thorns ?"

18. Kakati attended the XXII Session of the Indian Historical Records Congress (Peshwar, N.W.F.P.) in 1945, and *not* in 1943.

Kakati the Man

Prafulladatta Goswami

Dr. Banikanta Kakati, well known Professor of English and scholar, was not a person who encouraged familiarity. The casual visitor could hardly get anything out of him. Most of his students just attended his classes and had no occasion to get closer to him. Of the few who ventured to get closer, some turned away baffled, often pursued by a jeering laughter—he-he-he.

When I got through my I.A. I contemplated taking English as my Honours subject and felt that I should have a talk with the redoubtable professor on the matter of my choice. One of my senior contemporaries—now a prominent figure in Assam's politics—advised me not to see him. "Don't go to such a person," he said. I did not take the suggestion. I went and found the professor relaxing on his verandah. I told him of my desire to take Honours in English. He-he-he, he laughed his low pitched, jeering laughter and said, "Well, we are there to help you. You tap us like rubber trees, he-he-he..." Nothing like : How did you do in your I.A. examination ? What sort of books have you read ? You will have to work hard if you choose English—nothing like such teacher-like questions or observations.

Did I come back disgusted ? I think, I did. I felt it hardly mattered to him whether I took Honours in English or tapped rubber in a Malayan forest ! Nurtured in poverty and gifted with an exceptional intelligence, he had probably developed a protective shell round his personality and at the same time learnt not to put any value on untried enthusiasm. There is the story that in one of his school examinations he did so well in Sanskrit that his teacher gave him 105 instead of the maximum of 100. When the headmaster questioned the teacher, the latter explained, "My child has done so well; what could I do but give him another 5 marks ?" If Kakati began his life handicapped with poverty, he was not lacking in intelligence and perseverance.

Benjamin Jowett, Balliol's outstanding don of the last century, was also a man difficult to get on with. A person of intelligence and character, Jowett commanded respect but was not popular

in the usual sense. Only such students could profit from him as could stand his deep silences, occasional sarcastic remarks, exacting standards, and used their minds as well as they could. But, as one of his students recalls, "his greatest skill consisted, like that of Socrates, in helping us to learn and think for ourselves."

Dr. Kakati came out best in small and, preferably, advanced classes. After he left Cotton College and joined Gauhati University as Professor of Assamese his personality seemed to undergo a change and his analytical bent of mind, his sense of humour and a new sociability tended to make him more attractive. A guru does not shine without proper disciples. About this time he found himself surrounded by a few younger teachers who were eager to learn from him and emulate his example. This also probably helped him to open out.

Kakati was in a way a loner, not ambitious like other talented persons or keen on popularity like most of us. Nor did he work very hard, except on occasions. Early in his teaching life he wrote a series of essays on Assam's medieval literature and in the thirties he worked on his project of the study of the Assamese language. These two mainly, and perhaps a brilliant academic career, entrenched him in such prestige that, like Dr. Johnson, to the end of his life his public image remained sound and solid without his having to care for reputation in the usual sense. He did what he could and did when he wanted to. D. H. Lawrence seems to describe the type of man that Kakati was :

I shall keep my strength for myself; they can keep theirs as well.
Why should we beat our heads against the wall
Of each other? I shall sit and wait for the bell.

Kakati told me once, "Don't run after things, but once something comes your way, stick to it, don't give it up." He himself did not seem to follow this principle, for opportunities came his way and he spurned them, loving a quiet life, and perhaps preferring to gather moss rather than roll. Would he like to become the Director of Public Instruction—the top position in the Education department of the State? Would he accept the Chairmanship of the Public service Commission? Would he like to stand in the elections as a Congress candidate so that the ministership of Education might be his? Would he accept the Vice-Chancellorship of the proposed University?—No, he preferred none of these, he was happy as he was—as a teacher.

That was one reason why his prestige never waned. He was a symbol of solid work and unperturbedness. Dr. Radhakrishnan was being taken round the University building (temporary at the time). The famous visitor and Handiqui, the Vice-Chancellor, were passing close to the classroom-cum-office where Kakati was sitting. I said rather excitedly, "Sir, that's Radhakrishnan going round." He smiled and said, "Oh, it's all right, why should we run after him?" In those early days of the University there were quite a few teachers from outside Assam. They dressed well and also talked well. The unsophisticated local teachers felt a little subdued in their presence; what heartened the former was the example of Dr. Kakati, who did not have to dress flashily and talk brightly in order to prove his learning and depth.

The professor loved long walks across the fields by the Sarania hill or along the railway track or on the Shillong road. On Sundays he would sometimes go out in the morning and maybe, visit one of his more favoured younger friends. Sometimes he was accompanied by one of the latter. In these rambles he came out as quite a lovable personality, free and easy, affectionate, anecdotal and full of wisdom. He was a man of medium height, stocky in build, with a bulging forehead and rather penetrating eyes covered with thick glasses. His dress was of the simplest, dhoti and half-shirt, with a chaddar carelessly thrown across his shoulder, and a walking stick in his hand. Even his shoes were of canvas. Most of his life he smoked *bidis*. Only late in life, when, in the late forties, it was heard that *bidis* sometimes exploded like crackers, he started smoking cigarettes.

How I recall these rambles and the striking observations that he made ! By way of illustrating a point once he said, "You are an M.A. in English, you know your subject, but what else do you know ?" Much hung on this else and it was because of the want of this else that so few persons found intellectual acceptance from him. He was not for those who talked shop ! One evening we were sitting on the grass verge of the Shillong road and in a certain context he said, "If someone throws mud at you, when it dries, you can flick it off, but some of it sticks." On another occasion, when I complained that so-and-so had published a nasty rejoinder to one of my articles, he said, "Don't reply. Just go on doing what you can and do not get into a controversy." This was rather strange for a person who had at one time used the pen with considerable effect in a controversy between two rival schools of Vaishnavism.

The man who once wrote : "If one wishes to wield the club of Bhīma, one has first to acquire the strength of the latter," appreciated persons with some amount of tenacity of purpose and intelligence. At the same time he could also appreciate feelings and sentiments, to judge from his concern for a person suffering from bereavement or misfortune. There was a poet lurking in the heart of Dr. Kakati. He did not write verse but his appreciations of the poetry of several of his contemporaries are well known as well known is his English translation of the fiery poetry of Ambikagiri Roy Chowdhury. His attitude was that one should not undertake any project which came into conflict with one's feelings and sentiments. This I felt in particular in the sympathy and guidance that he gave me at a time when I was young and mentally a little restless.

One evening I came upon him on the western bank of the Dighali tank. It was a moonlit night, rather hot. We sat on the grass for some time. As I saw him off I told him that I had been reading a biography of George Eliot. He asked me to read *Romola*, saying I would like it. I spoke of the realistic attitude of George Eliot and the philosophical vein in her writing. He observed, "Western writers have a larger grasp of life. It is good to read and fill one's mind rather than cast pearls before swines—write for people who are not appreciative. Improve your mind—that is better." After a while he added, "Why not write fiction if you want to ? You have an excellent general background mentally and also some experience of writing short stories. It is better to concentrate on some work which has your emotional urge behind it. Even scholarship and cultural studies go into the making of a novelist." That was in May of 1952. I feel happy that I could show him a novel of mine before he left us the same year in November.

He used to say, "When I began writing my *Assamese : its formation and development*, there were hardly any books and journals here, and there was none to whom you could turn when you were in doubt.* You are in better days now."

In his early years as a college teacher he was hedged in by rules and regulations and what with a heavy teaching load and monthly

*When Kakati wrote his work, even Leonard Bloomfield's *Language* (1933) was not available to him. Names like Sapir and Bloomfield were hardly heard of in India at the time. Kakati got his doctorate on a diachronic study of Assamese (1935).—P.G.

examinations, he did not have enough time for intellectual pursuits. Once he dismissed an Honours class five minutes before the bell rang. Dr. Thompson, the Principal, noticed a student coming out of the class and pounced upon him. Learning that he was from Kakati's class, he stepped into the classroom and asked, "How is it, Kakati, you have let them off so early?" Rather embarrassed, Kakati said, "I've just finished a topic and there's hardly any time to begin another." "Why, you could teach them grammar."

One morning in 1951 he was sitting at my house, sipping tea. He was in a thoughtful mood, cogitating on the prospects of the Assamese language. "No, the language won't grow, it will just go on like Garo or Mikir.... Bengali publishers are printing Assamese translations of Bengali books. The Assamese won't publish books and even if they are published people do not read them. Observations of this nature are not relished by our people. On consideration of such a situation that I advocated once (1947) the acceptance of the Hindi alphabet. If we take the Hindi alphabet we are likely to get financial help. They are moneyed people, they would spend money for propaganda purposes and we should be able to bring out our books." This was however a mood of momentary depression. He believed in work and he knew, unlike his other scholarly contemporaries, how to stimulate others to work. He died too early to be able to see the impact his academic personality made on several of his younger colleagues and a number of his post-graduate students. He had no research students to guide in the conventional sense. The University had just come into existence and academic life was only in the formative stage. The student who wanted to work on a tribal language under his guidance was left in the lurch when the Professor unexpectedly left the world.

Dr. Kakati could grasp the essentials of a man's character in a lightning stroke. He would recount some funny aspect and end with his constant low-pitched laughter—he-he-he. Some of the anecdotes that he told us of Assam's greatness might be considered damaging and libellous. He recalled how, many decades ago, as part of the conference of Asam Sahitya Sabha at Dhubri, there was an exhibition of wrestling. The contestants were an Assamese and a Bengali. When the Bengali went down there was a thumping on the back of Kakati and a jubilant voice cried, "Bravo ! They have come up, the Assamese people have come up ! Now, my lad, write a 'philology'—what we need is the philology of the Assamese language." How

revealing that was of the naive character of the poet and thinker Kamalakanta Bhattacharya, whose primary concern was the regeneration of the Assamese people.

If we wanted a testimonial Kakati would ask us to draft it and say, "Don't you worry, I'll endorse it." Thereby hangs a tale. He would laugh and recount how Rai Bahadur Bhooban Ram Das used to get out of an embarrassing situation by just learning how to write "I endorse." Bhooban Ram Das was a public figure at the beginning of this century but did not know English. Whenever some young chap came to him for a testimonial he would ask him, "Have you been to Manik Baboo ? No ? Go to him and get his testimonial. I'll just endorse what he writes." The lad had to approach Manik Chandra Barooah, Bhooban Ram's patron and well educated, and get a testimonial. Bhooban Ram would then get hold of a pen wrapping his palm round it and write in large school-boyish handwriting : "I endorse." Dr. Kakati spoke about Professor Padmanath Vidyavined with admiration, at the same time recalling his eccentricities with relish. He recounted how once at a staff meeting the short-tempered professor had thrown a ruler at Principal Roberts for going back on some decision that had been taken earlier. The British teachers of the college respected the Sanskrit scholar for the courage of his convictions.

An incident that he recounted does not seem to do him credit but because it is a matter of history now, having happened so many years ago, it bears retelling. At one time there were M.A. classes in English at Cotton College. Professor P.C. Roy was the head of this department, and Kakati was the third man, the second being Professor S.K. Bhuyan. All of a sudden Government appointed a South-Indian named Abraham, a young chap with an Oxford degree, as head of the department. As Professor Roy gave vent to his pique : "I have put in twenty-two years' service and this chap of twenty-four years is going to boss over us !" Roy's daughter Sujata, a promising girl, was then doing her Honours in English. She was immediately moved to M.C. College at Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) so that Professor Abraham could not claim any credit for her getting a first class. Then Roy and Kakati laid their heads together to see what they could do to remove the "interloper." The time was one of world-wide economic depression and the finances of Government were tight. Kakati suggested to Roy that the latter report to Government that as there were very few students in the M.A. section it might as well be

abolished, thus leading to considerable saving. Roy acted upon the suggestion, with the result that the M.A. section was abolished and the young Oxonian lost his job (1933). In defence of Professor Roy and Kakati it may however be added that the M.A. English section had hardly any student and Professor Goffin—formerly of Cotton College—had opined that “classes in English were not worthwhile in Cotton College”.

I have written that Dr. Kakati was not an easy man to get on with, but once he took you into his heart he was outgoing in his desire for your welfare, he appreciated your efforts and encouraged you like an affectionate parent. It is not that he suffered fools gladly. He could not tolerate shallow writing or mere show of scholarship. His bantering laughter took care of that. But once, I believe, he was beaten at his own game ! Talukdar, the novelist, developed a fancy to antiquarian studies and invented some theories about the Buddha dying in Assam. He would write something, take it to Kakati and ask for his opinion. As he was persistent, Kakati found it difficult to turn him away. Reporting his ordeal to us later, Kakati used to laugh and say, “What could I do ? Supposing that bullet-head butted me ?”

He did not like to work hard or elaborate what he wrote. His books are usually small-sized but for Assamese : *Its Formation and Development*, but each one in a way breaks fresh grounds. *Puraṇi Asamīyā Sāhitya* showed how religious writings could be appreciated as literature; A.F.D. laid the foundation of linguistic studies in Assam; *Kalitā Jātir Itibrittā* was a pioneer in the socio-historical study of a community; *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, a compact study of the evolution of Assam's religious and social life, is often quoted by scholars; his *Vishnuite Myths and Legends*, a posthumous publication, is a study of Indian myths in folklore setting and highly suggestive.

Kakati wrote in a terse style. Some of his academic essays are too condensed and might have improved with a little elaboration and reworking. He used to observe, quoting a verse from the *Hitopadesham* : “Scholarship consists in cutting away unessentials : *paricchedo hi pāṇḍityam*.” The usual meaning of *pariccheda* is to come to a decision, the sense of the verse (*Mitralābha*, 249) being, “When misfortunes assail, wisdom lies in coming to a decision...” Dr. Kakati apparently gave his own interpretation.

Kakati did not claim omniscience though his teacher and colleague Professor P.C. Roy used to say that he was a walking encyclopaedia. I recall his telling me, "It is not that I read many books, but whatever I read I read thoroughly." He once said, "My life can be divided into certain stages. Just after entering service I took up the study of Sankardev and Old Assamese literature. Then it took me seven years to prepare my thesis. Then again *Kalitā Jātir Itibrittā* (the history of the Kalita race). Then *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*. I think it is time for me to leave these. What's the use of probing such matters ? That only leads to the loss of mental peace. I have been thinking of studying grammar, for once you get involved in a grammatical principle your mind stops tossing about and gets settled." He took up again the study of Latin, Greek and Sanskrit grammar. I gave him a Latin grammar that I possessed and he presented me a German grammar and advised, "Learn this language, you will find it useful one day."

He could laugh, he could tell jokes, he could relax with his younger colleagues and students at picnic spots, but he often seemed preoccupied, particularly towards the last years of his life.

He had certain family problems which remained unsolved. Then his wife died, just two months before his death. He also began to have attacks of illness. It is difficult to say if a person of such acute intellect could believe in a God. At one time when I was in need of reassurance he had very kindly sent me a short message : "Try to have faith in God or in a higher moral order." Was it this Shakespearian moral order that he believed in ? Did he also feel a bit disillusioned with life, even though he was blessed with most of the things that a poor struggler might aspire for ? It moves me even now to recall what he said one evening as we parted : "Do come more often, I feel so lonely sometimes." Perhaps every intelligent and thinking person ends by being lonely of heart.

Twenty-three years after his departure from this world, I can only echo a verse from Sanskrit : Like him there has been none, nor is there likely to be another. The loss of the man is not made up by the institutions that have grown up in his memory : the Banikanta Kakati Memorial Lectures at the University, founded at the initiative of Dr. B.K. Barua, Banikanta College of Teacher Education at Gauhati, with whose foundation I was closely associated, another college near Barpeta, and a high school or two.

Kakati and the Idea of Social Progress

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya

Dr. Banikanta Kakati was a man of keen intelligence and a gifted scholar. He was one of the finest products of the new system of education introduced by the British Government in India and Assam. All his works had a social direction. His doctoral dissertation, *Assamese : Its Formation and Development* helped establish the distinct identity of the Assamese speech at a time when it was hotly disputed in pan-Indian literary circles. The growing nationality consciousness of writers, scholars and social workers in the period between 1836 and 1921 was a remarkable phenomenon. Literature was considered as one of the vital national activities. In fact, L.N. Bezbarua went to the extent of declaring that language and literature were the gateway of national progress. The written word was the symbol of culture. While stress was laid on it, other aspects of culture and life were not neglected. Kakati's specialisation was in literature and philology, but he had a wider view of life.

His special achievement in the Assamese cultural field lies in the rationalistic reinterpretation of early Assamese literature. In our early literature, he discovered a popular source of profound spiritual wisdom. He believed that without this spiritual wisdom, national progress was not possible. Modern rationalists rarely see any point in such an assertion. To him, this ancient wisdom is nothing but an opiate. During the height of communal tensions in the months preceding the Independence, many Hindu and Muslim patriots interpreted religious values in a very narrow manner to suit their particular aggressive political standpoints. At that time, Jaya Prakash Narayan, who was a confirmed socialist, called upon the living Indian thinkers and philosophers to interpret the old religious thoughts in the true perspective. Kakati appreciated this idea and commended the path of integrated progress. He believed that freedom of India was essential, but this should not lead us to give up the path of ancient wisdom. This idea of synthetic progress was his most favourite idea. Perhaps this idea comes near the idea of a balanced national progress based on synthetic knowledge of science and spiritualism.

Kakati applied this comprehensive idea to the particular situation with which he was immediately concerned. He was concerned with the all-round progress of the Assamese nationality. This concern was progressive in an age which held national awakening as vital and sacred. One particular problem which deeply interested a serious intellectual of his age was reconciling the various standpoints of progress : regional, national and universal. Kakati specifically encouraged those tendencies in Assamese cultural life which harmonised these standpoints. He guided young writers and scholars in their creative and intellectual activities. Some of the well-known literary scholars of our times built their careers under his stewardship. This certainly helped in creating a nascent community of scholars having a scientific background. Some of the serious students of politics and economics were his intimate friends. Among them, mention may be made of Tyagabir Hemchandra Barua and Dr. Mathuranath Goswami: one was a committed nationalist politician and the other is a reputed economic scholar. He encouraged serious creative writers like Jatindra-nath Duara, Ambikagiri Roychaudhury and Raghunath Chaudhury, and introduced them to their public with sympathetic and relevant comments. Jyotiprasad received his patronage quite early in life. Again, Kakati was the first to appreciate the literary qualities of *Jivanar Bātat*, a work of fiction by the late B.K. Barua.

I remember how greatly he was interested in the first Assamese English daily, *The Assam Tribune*, and the second Assamese daily, *Dainik Asamiyā*. He used to come to the office of the *Dainik Asamiyā* and have talks with its editor, Dev Kanta Barooah, regarding the paper and journalism. No sphere of Assamese life escaped his attention and he expressed the belief in an article in *The Assam Tribune* that the Assamese thinkers would one day come of age and become recognised national leaders of thought. Only then, he said, independence would be meaningful to us. He also warned us against cynicism and despair. He believed that the numerical smallness of the Assamese nationality was no impediment to its future greatness. He reminded us of the Jews, who, despite their numerical inferiority, had contributed to the world's intellectual progress in an impressive manner.

There was a time when the cultural life of the Assamese middle class was not as diversified as it is today. Science occupied a minor place in education and the humanities were almost identified with literature. The stresses and strains of political and economic life did not allow aspirants for higher human knowledge to fulfil their ambitions.

Assam did not have a university of its own then. Kakati had to pursue his studies with difficulty and to keep himself posted with information about the changing concepts of research and its methodology. His later books, *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā* and *Visnuite Myths and Legends*, showed his growing interests in the socio-historical study of our cultural past. In *Purāṇi Kāmrupar Dharmar Dhārā*, we find a rational interpretation of ancient religious beliefs of our land in the secular humanist spirit. He always sided with the forces of rationalism in culture and lent the weight of his authority generally to serious pursuits of knowledge and creative work. As a man, he had of course his sympathies and antipathies, likes and dislikes, and moments of subjective judgement and objective fallibility. But he was essentially a scholar who had a larger vision of life. Once he was offered by the Assam Congress an opportunity to seek election to the Assam Assembly, but he shunned the offer.

In 1941, there was a big anti-imperialist strike in the Cotton College. A huge procession of striking students was mercilessly beaten by the police in Coolie Depot road in Paltanbazar on December 6. Kakati was one of the few teachers who expressed sympathy with the patriotic students. A scholar's life is usually quiet and mute. Kakati was a government servant, and preferred the quiet of his study to the din of the battles. Yet his sympathies were unmistakable. He always felt that knowledge and skill were needed to fight for a better social order. He used to say that to be a successful hero, one needed to go through a period of intense training. To students, he always gave this piece of advice.

In the absence of systematic data, it is difficult to reconstruct the socio-political ideas of Kakati. But various remarks scattered here and there in his writings as well as his private opinions make one thing clear : he always stood for ordered social progress and believed in the power of the young.

Ideology and the Work of Banikanta Kakati

Hiren Gohain

(I)

The Marxian concept of ideology has often been vulgarized, either in the direction of mechanical materialism or in that of an arbitrary idealism. The former kind of distortion neglects the creative character of intellectual work. It forgets that Marx's original formulation was dynamic and remote from the sense of passive reflection of primary socio-economic events later attributed to it. "Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas etc. real, active men, as they are conditioned by a determinate development of their productive forces and of the intercourse which corresponds to these, ..." (*The German Ideology*). The key-phrase for our purposes is 'producers of their conceptions', which evidently implies that ideas have to be produced, created, and are by no means inert precipitates of some all-powerful material process. Men produce their ideas about themselves and the world in course of their struggle to create the material conditions of life in accordance with the development of productive forces. Such ideas are not photographic copies of certain eternal realities, but reports on a certain stage in the development of productive forces and social relations. Without those reports it will be impossible to develop the productive forces or establish the social relations proper to that stage of historical development. Indeed they may outlive even the social relations if they serve to ensure the further growth of productive forces.

On the other hand such notions have only a relative degree of validity. As the productive forces develop, ideas arising from an earlier stage of their development and conforming to an obsolete system of social relations, become more and more obscure. Of course, unlike social relations ideas enjoy a far greater degree of freedom and flexibility. But if the ideas are harnessed by a decadent ruling-class no longer in command over development of productive forces, they will merely be used to mystify the actual social relations, including the reactionary role of the ruling-class. Besides, the reactionary intellectual is not interested in acknowledging the real situation, but only in

spinning out ever more fantastic theories to buttress a collapsing order. The creative element is thus bound up with a large scope for mystification. As Marx himself so often points out, the ideologies of the ruling classes are prone to ignore the material conditions of their existence.

The phantom debate of Marxism vis-a-vis Truth, so dear to Revisionists and bourgeois critics of Marxism, is thus quite beside the point. The historical development of both the material conditions and the corresponding ideas eliminates the idea of an absolute, eternal Truth in which the scholar may take refuge, in impartial distance from all conflicting schools of thought. Since development comes about through class-struggle, there is no vantage-point outside classes.

Our critique of Kakati's ideas also arises out of our position in the contemporary class-struggle in our society. But if we have no illusions about objectivity, we can at least avoid, by a proper understanding of the Marxian notion of ideology, the mistake of either idolising the thinkers of a past epoch and thus letting the past dominate the future, as well as the mistake of denigrating them in a spirit of retrospective wisdom and thus denying the very idea of historical development.

(II)

We do not therefore propose to study the intellectual life of Banikanta Kakati either as an eternal contribution to human knowledge or as a passing reflection of the socio-economic development of Assamese society in the first half of our century. Kakati made his chief contributions in historically sensitive fields like linguistics, social anthropology, and literary criticism. In all three fields his most original discoveries and insights may be related to the general historical development of Assamese/Indian society and culture in the period concerned. But they are also related to processes that are yet to reach the terminus of growth, and to conditions only dimly foreshadowed at that time and with a long period of development ahead of them. Where such forward-looking links are missing, his thought appears there as already outdated and obscurantist.

In the first half of this century Indian society was moving with increasing speed towards a crisis of the colonial order. The British

had re-organised traditional feudal social relations in order to accommodate them to their colonial needs—land-revenue to maintain 'Law and Order', cheap agricultural commodities as raw material for metropolitan industry, a helpless captive market for manufactures, and cheap labour for plantations. The situation was not without elements of violent change—the growth of private property in land of a sort, the break-down of village communities and cottage industries, the decline of the joint family, the growth of colonial trade and commerce, the spread of railways and roads, the commercialisation of agriculture, the pauperisation of the peasantry, the growth of a middle-class of professional and commercial people, dissemination of rational and liberal ideas by a westernised system of education and a young press. At the same time the colonial set-up had acted as a break-water for the violent waves of change. Capitalism did not penetrate and transform agriculture. Native industrial capital could not throw off the yoke of imperialist capital. The caste-system decayed, but did not fall apart. The survival of feudal relations and the superficiality of westernisation among the intelligentsia had led to the development of a peculiar cult of 'synthesis', which tried to accommodate the spirit of adventure and radical aspirations of an awakened nation to social stagnation, economic backwardness and political servitude. The synthesis was proclaimed to be the greatest intellectual feat of modern times, the gift of a spiritual India to a war-ravaged, besotted West !

By the end of the First World War new forces had appeared to challenge the imperial and native protagonists of this 'synthesis'. Economic distress had rendered the masses restive. The colonial regime also abandoned its silken pseudo-liberal phrases to administer a course of brutal repression, beginning with Jalianwallabagh. The message of the Russian Revolution (by now there is a large literature on this subject) had strongly affected both the peasantry and the urban petit-bourgeoisie. There was a greater, more wide-spread awareness of the 'Satanic' nature of the colonial regime, and the mood of the people turned more and more towards revolt.

The world-depression of the thirties further aggravated the sufferings of the common people, prices of agricultural commodities plummeted downwards, the hatred of the colonial regime increased among the less conscious sections, and a large section of the national leadership was radicalised. The newly formed Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party attracted large masses of energetic, dedicated

youths imbued with the spirit of sacrifice for the people. Under the pressure of such forums the Congress leadership was forced to raise the demand for complete independence in 1930. The All India Kisan Sabha was formed in the teeth of opposition from the Raj and the landlords and swiftly won a big following among the oppressed peasantry. At this juncture Gandhiji was working out formulas that appealed to both the big bourgeoisie and the poor peasants. His programme of rural reforms and reconstruction, his call for alleviation of the sufferings of the poor, inspired millions of peasants and thousands of Congress workers, but he did not call for a radical change in social relations leading to expropriation of the landlords and the big bourgeoisie.¹ Gandhism fascinated a large number of intellectuals, while the more militant sections were attracted to Communism and Socialism. The challenge to the old ideas and old leadership was dramatised in the election of Subhas Bose as the Congress President in 1939, defeating Gandhiji's candidate Pattabhi Sitaramaya. However, the Congress leadership succeeded a little later in expelling Bose. The failure of the national leadership in reflecting the true aspirations of the toiling masses led in the end to the rise of the communalist virus, actively encouraged by the British. Similarly the national leadership showed little understanding of the problems of the various nationalities and sought to bypass their legitimate aspirations in the name of a national spirit. Even Nehru was peeved when the Assam Congress leadership objected to the 'grouping' scheme under which Assam would have found herself in Pakistan.²

The throes of this crisis spread early to Assam. It will not be possible to deal here in detail with the history of the early period of British rule in Assam. The inquisitive reader is referred to the present author's *Origins of The Assamese Middle Class*, published in *The Social Scientist* (Vol. XIII), August, 1973. Economically, Assam could make little progress during the colonial period. Though the population of the province increased with the return to settled life and the end of the anarchy that attended the dissolution of the feudal Ahom rule, the colonial policy of enhancing the land revenue every ten or twenty years regardless of the decreasing fertility of the soil,³ the reluctance of the colonial authorities to invest in water-control and irrigation or other steps necessary for development of agriculture, the steady rise in the prices of manufactures, had in the end reduced part of the peasantry to destitution, and subjected the rest to extreme pressure. By 1928, in a province with a population of less than one crore, the peasantry were groaning under a debt of 22 crores!⁴

While population increased between 1921 and 1951 by 42·5%, the total cropped area per capita had decreased by 13·7%.⁵ The pressure on land may be imagined from the fact that by 1951, according to a sample survey in Sibsagar district 66% of the families held land-holdings of less than 15·10 bighas (about 5 acres) in size, and they were forced to limit their productive activities to a few months every year.⁶ The land-problem was further aggravated by increasingly massive immigration from Northern and Eastern Bengal, driven by acute distress and the tacit approval of colonial authorities who had discovered the advantages of communal tension.⁷ The overwhelming majority of the people had to depend on agriculture, for domestic industry had collapsed and there was little industrial activity to engage the surplus man-power in villages, estimated to have been as large as 52%. The colonial power was of course deeply interested in prospects of tea, the profit from which went largely to sterling companies with head-offices in London or to British managing-agencies based in Calcutta. Even in the districts where tea-plantations thrived, only one out of every ten thousand persons was returned in the 1951 Census report as 'employer',⁸ a fact that gives us some idea of the Assamese share in the capital invested in tea. (Needless to add, many of those employers were grocers and petty traders). In a memorandum to the Royal Commission on Labour in India in 1929 the Government of Assam stated candidly :

Assam is not an industrial province. It is an agricultural province with no large towns or industrial centres. Its largest and most important industry, tea cultivation, is mainly agricultural. Apart from that the only large labour concerns are the coal mines, the oil fields and a match factory. There are a few scattered saw mills, printing presses, rice mills, oil mills and engineering workshops, but they are small and of little importance.⁹

In 1951 the then Census Superintendent for the province felt constrained to remark that things had not changed much since then.

No wonder urbanisation also took place at a snail's pace. In 1921 2·4% of the population lived in towns. In 1941 3·3% of the population appeared as town-dwellers in the Census report, a growth of 0·9% in 20 years.¹⁰ In 1951 there were only six towns with population over 20,000.¹¹ In undivided Assam, including Sylhet, there were only 134,157 students in secondary schools including High School and Middle English Schools. There were, immediately before partition, only 23 Arts colleges with 5,014 students. The total number of Arts and Science graduates in 1951 was only 4,668. Prior to 1946 the

province had only two technical schools.¹² It is a measure of the extreme weakness of the modern culture in Assam that in 1951 only 70 persons were known to have been authors, editors and journalists, among whom 59 belonged to the plains.¹³

Our survey will remain incomplete without a glance at the horrible trade in Opium carried on by the 'paternal' colonial power. In 1921 twelve to thirteen hundred maunds of opium was sold in this province by the government through licensed traders. The revenue from it (opium-addicts had to pay a tax) amounted to 44 lakhs of rupees. Thoughtful and patriotic Assamese leaders often attacked the government sharply for plying this poisonous trade in Assam, but in the International Enquiry Commission in Geneva the official delegate from India presented the Government of India's view that opium was used in India only for medicinal purposes.¹⁴ Whatever little enterprise the Assamese had after the ruthless exactions of revenue was sapped by the rampant use of opium under the benevolent eyes of the colonial authorities.¹⁴

To complete the picture of woe, there was the systematic attempt by a section of the Bengali middle class to suppress and overwhelm the nascent Assamese nationality by calling Assamese language and culture mere corruptions of Bengali language and culture. For a time Assamese ceased to be used in schools and courts and offices. The patriotic Assamese had to fight doggedly for years for a proper recognition of the rights of their language. Of course, the liberal Bengalis were always sympathetic to the aspirations of the Assamese, and it was Sir Asutosh who granted a place to Assamese at the university. But the Bengali chauvinists discredited their entire nation in the eyes of the Assamese. The British were none too keen to see an end to this dispute, though the Assamese often thought them allies in their fight against the Bengalis. The real attitude of the colonial power comes out in the report of the then D.P.I Assam, Mr. Cunningham, on the movement to have a university for Assam. The report scoffed at the very idea.

From the very beginning, the leading stratum of the Assamese population was torn between a sense of their actual economic weakness and a burning desire to play a more active, dynamic role in the life of the country. After all it was the leading section of an awakened nationality. It was also strengthened by its close ties to the soil and its links with the peasantry. The gulf between the rich and the poor

in Assam never reached the staggering proportions of that in Bengal. There was a difference in the standard of living, to be sure. But the life-style remained the same, and the educated, well-to-do Assamese had no difficulty in communicating with the poorer and more backward sections of the rural masses. The enthusiasm they felt for the cause of national liberation spread easily to the peasants, and both the agitational and the constructive programmes of the Indian National Congress were welcome to the Assamese of the village and the town alike. Up to the twenties of our century the leadership was in the hands of the scions of patrician families like Torun Ram Phukon, Nabin Chandra Bardoloi and Kuladhar Chaliha. By temperament they were attached to constitutional methods of struggle, to negotiations and reforms, though there was not a shadow of doubt about their patriotism and their spirit of sacrifice. But younger leaders like Chandranath Sarma, Ambikagiri Raychaudhuri and Krishna Nath Sarma and Rohini Hati-Barua reflected the growing militancy and radicalism of the masses better.¹⁵ They had the temerity to invite the 1926 session of the Indian National Congress to Assam. Gandhiji at first had grave misgivings when he heard that the biggest town in the Assam plains had only a population of 16,000, but later, when he saw the youthful leaders and the masses toiling to make the session a resounding success he generously recognized their enterprise and patriotic zeal.¹⁶ In the thirties it fell to the lot of two outstanding and dedicated youths, Omeo Kumar Das and Hem Chandra Barua, to guide the movement of Civil Disobedience that surged through the province. The Opium Enquiry Committee of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee unearthed many gruesome facts and forced the government to restrain its lust for filthy lucre, and educated youngmen went around in scores to persuade the addicts to give up opium. As a consequence of large-scale agitations and propaganda the use of opium was drastically reduced in the province.¹⁷

The success of the Congress in Assam was largely the contribution of the youths. They were not only more militant and radical, but more national in their outlook. The Presidents of the Asom Chatra Sanmilan included distinguished outsiders like P.C. Ray the chemist, C.F. Andrews, Dr. Kudrat A. Khudai etc. In the thirties the cadres created by Asom Chatra Sanmilan constituted the backbone of the Congress Civil Disobedience movement.¹⁸ During one tour Hem Chandra Barua found that in Sibsagar 99 primary Congress committees had been functioning with 12,619 members.¹⁹ Women also came out of the Purdah and joined the movement in large numbers.²⁰

The tribute paid to the youth of Assam by the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee of the Indian National Congress in 1922 is worth quoting in this connection :

We had the privilege to meet and hear the views of some of the bravest and most trusted of Gandhiji's followers... young men holding high the torch of faith, amidst cruelty and devastation of illegal and unrestrained repression ; strong and cheerful in spite of darkness and depression all around. If India had such youths of courage and faith, serving the cause in all the provinces, there would be no doubt of the early attainment of the goal.²⁰

In the end the economic insecurity of the Assamese middle class drove some of these stalwarts into chauvinist positions. In the forties Ambikagiri, Nilamani Phukan and Jnan Bora parted company with the Congress for some time in their anxiety to preserve 'Assamese interests'.²¹ British diplomacy made the threat of Pakistan or of a united Bengal, with Assam as part of the scheme,²² increasingly real, and chauvinism was a predictable course for some. Then a rift was opened in the Congress leadership itself. The Ahom middle class largely abandoned the Congress, though the masses remained with the Congress. The agitation against casteism ran into troubled waters as vested interests fought back.²³ The Asom Sahitya Sabha, a prestigious body, never established close links with the movement for freedom.

Yet both the national and the international situation remained favourable to progressive ideas and attitudes and the Assamese leadership in the forties followed in the wake of Jawaharlal and Jaya Prakash in espousing the cause of Socialism. Hem Chandra Barua in his public speeches referred in detail to the advent of Communism in Russia and its benefits.²⁴ The Congress President in Assam took pains to study the subject of socialism.²⁵ Under the active patronage of the Congress two to three hundred **Raiyat Sabhas** were formed in Assam to uphold the cause of the oppressed peasantry. The Congress Ministry under Gopinath Bardoloi reduced land revenue rates by 50%.²⁶ The youth wings of the Congress and the Communist Party became particularly active during this period. Groups of bright young intellectuals brought out left-wing journals like **Jayanti** during the war, and expressed their views in trenchant language. Noted Congress leader and artist, Jyoti Prasad, became the first President of the Assam branch of the IPTA.²⁷ in 1949. But Gandhi dominated the Assam scene and few of the distinguished leaders could break away from his spell.

In the meantime two important ideological results had been accomplished with a far-reaching effect on the growth of the modern Assamese mind. First, the decisive acceptance of the Sibsagar dialect as the standard medium for literature, and secondly recognition of Sankar Deva as the central figure in the religious and cultural history of Assam. Sankar Deva's movement was a mixture of protest and conformity. Like all medieval cults of Bhakti he preached an absolute devotion to one powerful deity and thus came in conflict with the priestly code of sacrifice and offering to numerous gods. On the other hand, he never challenged the Brahmins openly. He was not particularly strict in advocating caste-rules. But since he was working in a milieu of disintegrating tribes, his movement in the end helped establish feudalism with rudiments of caste. He brought down *shastric* religion to the level of the masses by embodying it in dance, drama and popular literature, but he also preached a severe disenchantment with the world and a gloomy view of life. Up to the time of Kakati and even beyond, Sankar Deva remains a source of potent influence.

Like many of the younger leaders of the Congress in Assam, Kakati also was born and brought up in humble surroundings. But while he had great respect for Gandhiji, and translated Ambikagiri's militant patriotic lyrics into English, his sympathy for the Freedom movement was cautious and reserved. His enthusiasm for it never went far enough for him to abandon a secure academic career at a government institution. Indeed he increasingly developed an ironic attitude to political agitations at the very time such agitations were assuming a radical popular character. Of course there is nothing surprising in the fact that in his eyes the reformist outlook was always the 'more practical' one.

(III)

Banikanta Kakati's actual output at first glance gives no adequate indication of its tremendous significance for the cultural and intellectual history of Assam. He has to his credit three or four books of scholarly merit *Assamese : Its Formation & Development* (which was his Ph. D. thesis), *Purāṇi Asamiyā Sahitya*, a collection of essays in Assamese on the classical Vaishnava literature of Assam, and *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, a contribution to the religious history of

the region from tribal mother-goddess cults and phallic rites to the neo-Vaishnavism propagated by Sankar Deva. One may also mention in this connection *Vishnuite Myths and Legends*, where, as in the book mentioned before, he makes use of the discoveries in ethnology and mythology to lay bare the roots of certain religious ideas and practices.

All these books reveal the supreme organising intelligence of his intellect and his wide and searching erudition. Not only the selection and marshalling of data, the formulation of hypothesis, the impeccable logic of the argument, but the crispness and austere beauty of the prose suggest an original and forceful genius at work. After these works Assamese intellectuals found before them a standard with which to judge their own intellectual maturity. Of course Kakati also wrote numerous fugitive essays in a more casual and meandering vein, but those did not show him at his best.

Yet his intellectual achievement cannot be considered a jagged and solitary peak jutting out of flat plains. In fact it was closely connected with the ideology and world-outlook of a nascent middle class that found itself stunted by the relentless pressure of colonialism and under-development. In our historical survey of the economy and society of Assam under British rule we saw how the late and insufficient growth of commodity production during the feudal period, coupled with the domination of British capital in colonial times conspired to retard the development of local capitalist enterprise. Hence the Assamese middle class developed mainly as a class of professional people, salaried officials, landlords and small businessmen. Most of them had to fall back on landed property when they were in trouble. Landed property, in spite of the new system of land tenure was linked to semi-feudal exploitation of share-croppers and debt-ridden poor peasants. This explains the still strong attachment of the Assamese middle class to feudal sentiments and traditions. Of course, the petit-bourgeoisie, and especially the professional class of lawyers, developed somewhat greater sympathy for modern ideas and radical sentiments. But they too had a stake in the land, and besides, they had no prospects as a class of property-owners except as friends of the big bourgeoisie. That is why we find a certain duality in the world-outlook of the Assamese middle class. For generations they had stood in awe of the colonial power and gratefully acknowledged the benefits of British rule. And when the time for a decisive struggle with the colonial power came they could not completely adopt the class-out-

look of the toiling masses. In spite of their militancy, their undoubted sympathy for progressive ideas, they did not join the camp of the Socialist forces. No doubt the working-class movement of the region was also not strong enough to guide them, and in fact was under their control.

This fundamental insecurity was felt by them at the apex of a rising wave of country-wide popular enthusiasm. The middle class never felt strong enough to be an independent leading power. At the height of its friendship with Socialist forces it did not ask itself the very practical question of the role of the big bourgeoisie or of imperialist capital. It is hardly to be wondered at, then, that Banikanta Kakati's earliest exercise in writing for the public, a scholarly literary essay read out before a students' conference, had as its theme the sadness at the heart of things.²⁸ One would not otherwise understand why a brilliant young college student, who had beaten the brightest students of Assam, Bengal, Orissa and Bihar in examinations (for all those regions were under the jurisdiction of Calcutta university), should feel such instinctive sympathy for a tragic philosophy of life.

"Human life", remarked the young scholar in that remarkable essay, "from the first awakening of consciousness to its ultimate extinction is but a sensation of enduring pain, a long-drawn-out sigh of heart-break."²⁹

This pessimism was of course further reinforced by a deep disenchantment with the world, an austere life-denying attitude, derived from the traditional piety of the Mahapurushiya faith, a legacy from the times of Sankar Deva and Madhav Deva. Kakati felt anew, in the new set-up, the strength of emotions favoured in the traditional religion of Assam. He does not really meet the challenge of the West in its own terms, but, like other distinguished members of the middle class, turns away from science and 'material success' to a life of self-denial and spiritual peace. In an essay on Amiel he wrote :

But the immensity of the speculation and the passion for totality that seem to activist European scholars mere fireworks are no strangers to the Indian mind. The feeling of oneness with the world, the longing for that, and the imagination of that unity are central to Indian culture and literature.³¹

Kakati attacks Western scholars who had dismissed Amiel's mystical lucubrations as a 'malady of the ideal'. He argues that to the Indian mind, less enamoured of the pomp and power of the immediate and the practical, Amiel's passionate quest for totality is entirely legitimate.

It is obviously not a problem for him, as it is for later generations in India, that such absorption in totality might encourage a dreamy disregard for the real world.³²

Yet, as we have already remarked in our brief historical survey, it will not be quite correct to think that the new situation merely repeated the pattern of the past. There were new elements. A certain measure of this-worldliness, of temporal urges and longings, certainly got past the censor of traditional pessimism. Kakati's career itself, and indeed the career of many a distinguished Assamese gentleman of those days, was an illustration of rare enterprise, grit and initiative, which brought people out of humble and obscure backgrounds into the forefront of society. In an article called *Nirav Sādhana* he pays a glowing tribute to this kind of rugged individualism :

It may be considered an axiom that any great achievement pre-supposes an arduous course of training and preparation in the earlier part of a man's life, and such preparation is best carried on in silence. Those who are given to noisy vaunting from their younger days dissipate their energies in shouting and bragging. They have little energy and enthusiasm left afterwards for serious accomplishments.³³

This love of sober industry has its origin in the Victorian work-ethic inculcated in school-lessons of those days.

There was yet another element that Sankar Deva had nothing to do with. Sankar Deva was not a nationalist, though people of Kakati's generation habitually attributed this anachronistic mentality to him. Kakati could not but respond to the sense of a national awakening that throbbed in the veins of the Assamese in the first decade of the century. In a sense his literary criticism was an instrument of this new local nationalism. He unfolded the treasures of our past heritage before the enlightened modern generations, and it was gratifying to know that our classical literature passed rigorous modern aesthetic tests. In a way Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, his contemporary and colleague at Cotton College, was rendering the same kind of service by unearthing and bringing to light the factual information of Ahom chronicles. These two scholars made every educated Assamese proud of his national heritage and gave him a stable sense of national identity. His thesis was instrumental in establishing on scientific grounds the separate identity of the Assamese language and thus disarmed the chauvinistic ambitions of a section of the Bengali intellectuals. It was a victory the significance of which it would be easy to pass over lightly today. But without it the entire edifice of modern Assamese culture would have remained half-finished. In later life he

continued to affirm his strong loyalty to the cause of Assamese nationalism. He bewailed the fact that the market for books in Assam³⁴ should be so small, he expressed anxiety at the influx of 'outsiders'³⁵, and he advocated passionately the use of literature to revive the flagging energies of the Assamese nationality.³⁶ Yet this nationalistic chanting has only a muted anti-imperialist strain. The editors of the present volume report that Kakati was tied by feelings of personal gratitude and obligation to the notorious Cunningham, D.P.L. of the Government of Assam, and known for his intense hostility to the freedom movement. That could be a significant fact. But it is also fair to add that in the late thirties and forties some of the most outstanding of the Assamese leaders, who had made many sacrifices for the freedom movement, began to grow sceptical of Congress aims and for a time even held that the colonial power was less of a danger to Assam than 'outsiders'.³⁷

The content of this Assamese nationalism was itself an interesting, if potent, hodge-podge. For one thing, it carried over from the nineteenth century the anti-Bengali sentiments of the founding fathers of modern Assamese literature. Here the loyalist Padmanath Gohain-Barua and the nationalist Ambikagiri could be in whole-hearted agreement. Secondly, it was an article of faith that the best Assamese families were Aryans and that the best elements of Assamese culture were also Aryan. Such an attitude naturally encouraged a condescending attitude to the numerous tribal population of the region and prevented closer identification with them. In *Purani Asamiyā Sāhityā* he expresses satisfaction that the Assamese language retained its Aryan character in the midst of a babel of non-Aryan tongues spoken by aliens.³⁸ In the preface to the same work he claims that the 'ancient Assamese national tradition' was kept alive between the cross-fire of Ahoms, Moghuls and Koches, by Vaishnava literature. Kakati does not seem to have an inkling of what is becoming clearer every day to scholars, that transmission of 'Aryan' culture need not imply large-scale migration of Aryan races.³⁹

Yet it must be re-iterated that nationalism gave courage and self-confidence to the Assamese. It not only stimulated industry and emulation, but it even rallied the fighters against foreign rule. The leaders and the masses derived more powerful stimulus from the tangible historical reality of Lachit and Jaymoti, Sankar Deva and Nar Narayan, than from the dim legends of Pragjyotishpur. Even the sober Kakati allows himself the luxury of an effusive sentiment when he recalls

that Assam was a kingdom with unbroken sovereignty for centuries before the British appeared.⁴⁰ But he also connected it with Hindu resistance against an 'alien' Mohammedan rule!⁴¹

Living in a period marked by national and world-wide upheavals and cataclysms he could scarcely ignore the power of the forces of change. One is impressed by the candour and serenity with which he acknowledges the need for change and argues against the conservative fear of change :

Even if we cling obstinately to the old ways of life and thought, the living current of time will sweep us away from our anchorage with such force that we may lose all bearings. That is the reason why the literature of the new age must help us to find our bearings, to discover our identity.⁴²

He of course admitted that he had no clear idea of how things would turn out in the future. He wanted contemporary literature to embody concretely the visions of progress in concrete human terms so that it becomes possible to understand and judge them better.⁴³ He had before him one great example of beneficent change, the change brought about under Sankar Deva's leadership. His language acquires a sublimity when he refers to that historic change seldom found in his studiously dry prose :

It was not a secret doctrine whispered from ear to ear. It was proclaimed in places of public congregation, it was proclaimed in places of public amusement, it was echoed when people in the course of the day's business relieved their hearts in songs. The clash of arms of the contending chiefs lost its terror and the nocturnal revelries their temptations for the followers of the new faith.⁴⁴

Yet it can be said without fear of contradiction that he did not correctly understand the change that he noticed with such percipience. His Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā is a living testimony to his powers of analysis and reasoning. He tore apart the cobwebs of legend and mystery to trace the direction of history in Assam of pre-Ahom times. That direction is covered by the term adopted four years later by M.N. Srinivas : 'Sanskritization'.⁴⁵ But in Karati's account both the early adaptation of the cult of Kamakhya, and its later overthrow by Sankar Deva were episodes of civilized Aryans triumphing over uncivilized local non-Aryans. Scholars nowadays tend to emphasize in the process social-cultural change rather than ethnic migration.⁴⁶ The tribals would not have accepted the higher culture so easily, had their own culture not failed to accommodate far-reaching socio-economic changes. The higher culture accompanied a revolution in mode of

production. Unfortunately the racist view of history dies hard, and one is dismayed to find tribal groups trying to 'outgrow' a tribal past and laying claim to an entirely mythical ancestry. The distinguished scholar E.A. Gait had noted in the 1891 Census Report on Assam that the majority of the Assamese Hindus must have sprung from tribals converted to Hinduism.⁴⁵

Banikanta Kakati had little patience with the methods of mass-politics, and he made withering remarks about agitations and fiery speeches on a number of occasions. In a splenetic flash of analogy he even traced the free verse of modern poetry to the irregular march of mass-processions!⁴⁷ For him agitations were a kind of wild behaviour, demonstrations were a form of bragging and vaunting.⁴⁸ The proper answer to such invective, born of academic prejudice, may be given by quoting a great Assamese leader of the thirties, Tyagbir Hem Chandra Barua. Asked what mere agitations could achieve, he had remarked with insight :

Movement is the end of movement. It is training the nation for the final struggle for freedom and instilling in the people energy and concentration for that approaching period.⁴⁹

But the masses in their wild outburst of enthusiasm had also touched the scholar in his retreat. Several times he refers to the examples of Russia and China with warm admiration. What he applauds in their efforts is their concern for the masses, the pains they were taking to educate and enlighten them.⁴⁹ Kakati also came to feel that without the material and cultural improvement in the lot of the masses, neither India nor the Assamese nationality within it had any future.⁵⁰ He advocated the dedication of writers to the cause of progress and enlightenment of the down-trodden masses—something that entrenched academic interests of today find unwelcome. He even thought modern writers ought to suit their language to this overriding need, that they should use in their writings the racy, idiomatic language of the people, and the traditional techniques of communication.⁵¹ If that meant a change in literary values and ideals, he was not a man to dread such a change. He had enough sense of history to realise that ideals and values were not eternal. Did he not himself demonstrate that Sankar Deva had radically changed the literary ideals of his time?⁵²

Kakati could not (and how many could, in those days of social upheavals and political movements?) accept the credo of 'Art for

Art's sake'. He saw literature as a potent instrument of propaganda and persuasion. To quote his words :

History bears eloquent testimony to the influence of literature on life. Literature has a primary role in propagation of new faiths and triggering off of social revolutions. It is hardly necessary to dilate on the enormous influence of Luther's works in propagating Protestantism, and that of Sankar Deva and Tulsi Das etc. in spreading the gospel of medieval Vaishnavism. Nor need one explain how Rousseau and Voltaire and Lenin had through their works influenced the courses of revolutions in modern times. 53

Yet for him literature is no passive medium for enunciation of principle and dissemination of ideas. Though deeply committed to the vision of traditional religion he affirmed a view of literature that was basically humanistic. Human life and its destiny, human feelings and passions, the drama of man seeking to realise his dreams were for him at the centre of literature. He also upheld the dignity and independence of literature against the hectoring simplification of political propagandists. The propaganda of literature has a "special method" of its own, which may be ignored only at the cost of total sterility.⁵⁴ Literature renders the mind receptive by softening it with charged images of hope and despair, happiness and sorrow.⁵⁵ Politics would be barren if literature did not project its dreams and hopes in images that made an immediate appeal to men, and it is even possible to assess the claims of political ideology when they assume such forms.⁵⁶ Kakati does not make it clear whether he thought the writer completely independent of the political process, sitting in impartial judgment over the conflicting claims of ideologies. This of course is sociologically nonsense, and is merely an old academic illusion. Why is it that Kakati warmed to mystical and religious strains in literature more than to other sentiments ?

Dr. Dilip Barua rightly points to the link between the criteria in Kakati's criticism and Romantic aesthetic.⁵⁶ He even approached 'classical' Assamese literature of the Vaishnava period not as works of religious instruction but as works expressing intense personal feelings of devotion and love for God. In his own words :

The literary appeal of *Nāmghoshā* does not lie in its profound philosophical theories, because these are always accessible to the intellect, while literature moves the heart. Nor does its value lie in its religious opinions, for other religions may not agree with them. As literature its value lies solely in its sentiment of profound and total devotion. 57

Yet the problem of belief cannot be evaded, in spite of the sophistry of bourgeois aesthetics. It is obvious that the 'personal' feelings in Namghoshā are of a completely different order from the feelings of a Keats or a Wordsworth. The objects to which they are attached are also different. Not all of us would attune spontaneously to the mood of self-denial and world-weariness that dominates Namghoshā. Kakati himself points out how the Vaishnava movement either transformed or rejected a more secular (*laukika*) attitude prevalent in literature up till then, and he shows that that attitude was not without certain literary successes to its credit. But there is no question that for him the Vaishnava school represented a higher kind of achievement.⁵⁸

A similar problem faced him, and faces his readers now, in the matter of attitudes to love and woman. It is interesting that in literary criticism he usually commends mystical flights sublimating any carnal impulses the poet might have felt.⁵⁹ His favourite example is that of Dante and Beatrice. Dante's love is ideal because in it "the poet's feeling of love and the divine ground of the world are felt as identical".⁶⁰ In his *Sāhitya Āru Prem* he distinguishes those minds that are consumed by the burning of lust and those whose reactions elevate their imagination and intellect to a higher plane, extinguishing carnal longings and awakening a thirst and effort for transcendent beauty and joy.⁶¹ To such minds a beautiful woman is merely a symbol of ideal beauty. But those for whom beauty is only a form of sensuality have to pay a terrible price, with them beauty assumes a monstrous form and releases a terrible storm that ravages and uproots all ideal and aspiration.⁶² He is at pains to prove that the 'para-kīyā prem' of Bengali Vaishnavism had nothing carnal about it, but that it was 'kāma-gandha-hīna', bereft of lust.⁶³ But does beauty always reside in such extremes? Did not the European Renaissance also demonstrate that the sense of beauty, whether in women or in other natural objects, could have a touch of the ideal without losing any of its sheer sensuousness? We may reasonably wonder if this relentless denial of all glory to the sensuous and immediate was not an escape from the constraints of a stagnant economic order that stimulated mundane dreams and aspirations but blocked all paths of their fulfilment. Now that we are less drunk with the drug of transcendence, we may suspect behind certain expressions of mysticism an urge for mystification.

Notes

1. M. A. Rasul, *A History of the All India Kisan Sabha* (Calcutta, 1974) p. 5, for Lohia's speech.
2. See, for instance, Tayyabullah, *Karāgārar Chithi* (Publication Board, Gauhati, 1965) pp 114 ff.
3. *Krishna Sarmār Diary* (Publication Board, Assam, Gauhati, 1972), p 250
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Census of India Report*, 1951, Vol. XII, p.213.
6. *Op. Cit.* p. 396
7. *Op. Cit.* p. 31
8. *Op. Cit.* p. 247
9. *Op. Cit.* p. 291
10. *Op. Cit.* p. 126
11. *Op. Cit.* p. 149
12. *Op. Cit.* pp. 354
13. *Op. Cit.* p. 289
14. *Krishna Sarmār Diary* pp 127-129
Tyāgbir Hem Baruā Smriti Grantha (Gauhati, 1971), edited by Dr. S.N. Sarma, p. 11
15. *Bhāratār Mukti-jun-jat Asam* (Souvenir, Assam State Freedom Fighter's Convention, Gauhati, 1972), p25, p27, pp100-101
Krishna Sarmār Diary, p99, p121, p171
Tyāgbir Hem Baruā Smritigrantha, p19
16. *Krishna Sarmār Diary*, p161
17. *Tyāgbir Hem Baruā Smritigrantha*, p11
18. *Bhāratār Mukti-jun-jat Asam*, p42, p30
19. *Tyāgbir Hem Baruā Smritigrantha*, p58
Tyāgbir Hem Baruā Smritigrantha, p30,
Bhāratār Mukti-jun-jat Asam, p30, p42, p58
20. *Young India*, August 1922
21. *Bhāratār Mukti-jun-jat Asam*, pp 121-122
22. *Ibid.* See also Tayyabullah, *Op. Cit.* pp 383-390; K. N. Dutta, *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam* (Gauhati, 1969), pp 110-111
23. *Op. Cit.* p47
Krishna Sarmār Diary, pp 211-215, p 226-230
24. *Tyāgbir Hem Baruā Smritigrantha*, p32, p58
Bhāratār Mukti-jun-jat Asam, pp46-47
25. Tayyabullah, *Karāgārar Chithi* (Publication Board, Gauhati, 1965), pp 122 ff.

26. Tyāgbīr Hem Baruā Smṛitigrantha, p35
27. Prafulla Misra, "Communist Movement in Assam", in *Northeastern Affairs* Vol. I (July-Sept., 1972)
28. Bānī Pratibhā (Asam Lekhak Samahāya, Gauhati, 1966), pp 38ff
29. Op. Cit., p 38
30. Banikanta Kakati, *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā* (Gauhati, 1948)
31. Banikanta Kakati, *Sahitya Āru Prem* (Gauhati, 1948), p87
32. Op. Cit. p73, p82, p87 etc.
33. Bānī Pratibhā, p60
34. 'Jātiya Chaitanya' in Bānī Pratibhā, p57-58
35. Op. Cit. p56
36. Op. Cit. p57
On page 64 of the same book Kakati expresses concern and regret at the fact that Assamese life has not been reflected in modern literature with complete fidelity. He considers the novel, *Jivanar Bātat*, the sole exception (p 78).
37. Bhāratār Muktijunjat Asam, pp121-122
38. Banikanta Kakati, *Puraṇi Asamiyā Sāhitya* (published in book-form, Gauhati 1940, though written around 1918), Preface and p. 11.
39. See for instance D.D. Kosambi, *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India*, (London, 1965) pp170-17
40. Banikanta Kakati, *Puraṇi Kāmrupar Dharmar Dhārā* (Gauhati, 1955) p.
41. Op. Cit. p.
42. 'Jug-Sāhitya Āru Samājar Rup-rekhā' in Bānī Pratibhā, p. 77
see also *Puraṇi Asamiyā Sāhitya*, p69
43. Bānī Pratibhā, pp 77-78
44. Banikanta Kakati, *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā* (Gauhati, 1948), pp 81-82
45. In M.N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (Oxford, 1952). The Coorgs were originally a non-Hindu tribe and were later absorbed into the Hindu society.
46. E.A. Gait, *Census of India Report* (1891), Vol. I, p. 15.
47. Bānī Pratibhā, p 79
48. Tyāgbīr Hem Baruā Smṛitigrantha, pp 13-14
49. 'Āmār Natun Sāhitya' in Bānī Pratibhā, p. 66, pp 69-70
50. Bānī Pratibhā, pp 69-70
51. Ibid., p 69
51. Bānī Pratibhā pp 68-69
52. Kakati, *Puraṇi Asamiyā Sāhitya*, p. 70, pp 96-97
53. 'Bhabishyatar Asamiyā Sāhitya, in Bānī Pratibhā, p 66

54. *Purāṇi Asamiyā Sāhitya*, p 10, pp 82-84
55. *Ibid.*
56. Dr. Dilip Barua, 'Samālochak Bānikanta Kākati' in *Prakāśh*, Publication Board, Assam. October, 1976, pp 98-99.
57. 'Namghoshā' in *Kakati*, *Purāṇi Asamiyā Sāhitya*, p. 94
58. *Op. Cit.*, p 70, pp 97-101.
59. *Bāṇi Pratibhā*, pp 91-92, p 97, p 116
60. *Sāhitya Āru Prem*, p 40, p71
61. *Op. Cit.* Preface.
62. 'Saundaryar Pratāraṇā' in *Sāhitya Āru Prem*, p 43
63. *Purāṇi Asamiyā Sāhitya*, pp 44-45.

PART II

Linguist, Literary Critic & Sociologist

Professor Banikanta Kakati, the Indologist from Assam

Maheśwar Neog

Two names from Assam stand out in the world of indology. Those are Anundoram Borooah, who remains only a legend now, and the living Sanskritist, Professor Krishnakanta Handiqui. Anundoram was a contemporary of Vincent A. Smith and Ramesh Chunder Dutta in the Indian Civil Service, and like them he turned his eyes upon the glorious past of India. He, however, specialized in a study of the Sanskrit language, which he declared to be the sweetest language in the world. He did great work in the field in the midst of his heavy official duties and by dint of his achievement became one of the notable pioneers among modern Sanskritists even though he was cut away by death in his prime. Krishnakanta Handiqui has built up his great image mainly through his two works—his definitive historical studies of Sriharsa's *Naisadhiacarita* and Somadeva's *Yasastilaka*. His magnum opus, however, is possibly his recent publication with an attempt at the history of Prakrit kavyas wound round a critical study of the old text of the *Setubandha*. This is definitely a milestone in the history of the study of Old and Middle Indo-Aryan languages. Professor Handiqui presided over the Classical Section of XVth Session of All India Oriental Conference and was elected General President of the Kashmir session which, however, he declined.

Both these scholars from this remote corner of Assam have been widely known and acknowledged. Another fine figure who could have loomed as large as they is that of Banikanta Kakati; but not much of his work has gone out of Assam to claim for him such a place, although in close linguistic circles his *Assamese—Its Formation and Development* on the history and philology of the Assamese language has its due share of recognition and a few original research papers on the language and society in Assam appeared from time to time in oriental journals like *The New Indian Antiquary* and in a number of Festschrifts and Commemoration Volumes.

Dr. Kakati's contribution to indic studies might be broadly divided into two groups : his investigations into the languages of Assam,

and, secondly, into the religious life in Assam and, peripherally, in India as a whole.

Banikanta Kakati was initially a student of English literature and language. This gave him the opportunity of learning the art of modern and scientific query and expression and the methods of literary exposition, and brought him in deep touch with Western writers on Indian subjects.

He passed the M.A. Examination of Calcutta University in 1918 in English Group A (Literature); but having secured only a Second Class therein, he prepared on his own to take the examination again in English Group B (Language), which he did in 1926 and obtained a First Class. The appreciation of his linguistic talents by Professor Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, who was his teacher and whose house he used to frequent for guidance after his fine success in M.A. Group B, and Dr. Chatterji's own great work, *The Origin and Development of Bengali Language*, which was published in 1926, provided great inspiration to the young man from Assam for linguistic studies. Dr. Bloch's *La Formation de la Langue Marathe* and Dr. Turner's *Nepali Dictionary* were other standard works to hold the model for such an enterprise. Dr. Chatterji continued to help him in this new work, and remembering this, wrote later on, "In a way, Banikanta and myself were similarly situated—both of us were drawn to do something for our mother-tongues impelled by the impetus we received from our study of the History of the English Language and Germanic Linguistics. I was happy to find in him a fellow worker whose explanation of the problem of Assamese by the new light he could alone throw on the subject as an Assamese speaker with proper linguistic equipment was bound to be of help for Bengali and Oriya, sister-languages of Assamese." When Kakati's thesis, *Assamese, Its Formation and Development*, was presented for examination, Chatterji appreciated its value, but the two other examiners were "a little too exacting" in the opinion of Dr. Chatterji, and withheld consent to approve the work for the degree. On Professor Chatterji's request, his guru, Dr. Jules Bloch of Paris, helped Kakati with copious notes and criticisms, which improved the book, and in 1935 Banikanta Kakati was admitted to the much prized Ph.D. degree of Calcutta University.

This was a monumental achievement not only because it provided a scientific basis to the study of the Assamese language and thus lifted it to a higher place in the world of scholastic studies, but

also because it is one of the earliest works on individual modern Indian languages. It is thus a pioneering work in the field of Indian linguistic studies as a whole and must have inspired later workers in the subject in relation to other languages. Reputed scholars like Dr. S.M. Katre and Dr. Baburam Saxena were Kakati's contemporaries in their studies, *Formation of Konkani* and *Evolution of Awadhi* respectively. Bloch's and Chatterji's were the real path-finders. Especially Chatterji's book provided immense inspiration to a new batch of linguists. It was not only a study of Bengali as its name would signify, but was, in reality, a sort of masterly treatment of the whole Indian linguistic scene particularly in regard to Indo-Aryan. It was this great work that was the prime source of Kakati's inspiration and the model of his operation. As a matter of fact, *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* forestalled much of what was to be said by the Assam scholar. This would be clear even from a cursory glance at the lists of contents of *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* and *Assamese, Its Formation and Development*. This does not, however, detract the value of the junior scholar's work, for the position in regard to Assamese stood in need of being stated with force and in detail in a vigorous examination historically, not much work having been so far done on the subject. Kakati himself gives a survey of the situation as it stood at his time. He writes in the Preface : "Assamese has been very little studied abroad. It has not even been mentioned in the existing comparative grammars of the NIA languages. In a work on pure linguistics, it was for the first time noticed in Dr. S.K. Chatterji's *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, 1926. But that great work being mainly devoted to the examination of the growth and structure of the Bengali language, Assamese forms have been brought in here and there for the sake of comparison or amplification of some points. Assamese forms have also been similarly treated in Grierson's *Modern Indo-Aryan Vernaculars* (Supplement, *Indian Antiquary*, 1931-1933).

"Even by itself Assamese has been very insufficiently examined. The first grammatical notice of Assamese was taken by Rev. B. Brown, in his *Grammatical Notes on Assamese Language*, 1848. Those notes were primarily meant for the American Baptist Missionaries, and were accordingly short. Prof. Nicholl summarised the main features of spoken Assamese in his work *Manual of the Bengali Language including Assamese Grammar* in 1894. Two native grammarians, Hemchandra Barua and Satyanath Bora, wrote two grammars in Assamese;

but good as these vernacular grammars are in their own way, they are elementary and meant for school boys, and are scarcely of any use to advanced students of historical grammar. In 1936, as these pages were being made ready for the press, was published Mr. Kaliram Medhi's *Asamīyā Vyākaraṇa āru Bhāṣāntara*, written in Assamese. It is an ambitious work and is supposed to be written on historical principles. But though it contains a mass of early Assamese forms, the mode of approach to the subject is far from scientific and it does not place this publication under any obligation." Kakati, it may be noted, has omitted one notable name, that of Devananda Bharali's *Asamīyā Bhāṣā Maudik Vīcār āru Sāhityae Cīvāki*, 1912, 2 ed., 1933, which has at least the semblance of a scientific study without being one in its entirety.

Pointing to the antiquity and literary wealth of the language, he continues : "Assamese has thus preserved in earlier records sufficient materials for a historical study of the easternmost NIA vernaculars. Its lexical wealth is also vast and varied. Up till now three comprehensive dictionaries have been published. The first was the Assamese-English Dictionary of M. Bronson, 1867; the second was that of Hemchandra Barua, the grammarian, published 1900; the third is a comprehensive Assamese-English Dictionary published under the auspices of Asam Sahitya Sabha, 1932. The outstanding feature of all the Assamese lexicons is the sedulous care with which all homely *tbh* and indigenous words have been faithfully registered. Learned Sanskrit words that constitute the bulk of the entries in current Bengali dictionaries have as a rule been avoided. Sanskrit words are recorded only when they have been fully Assamicised. The existing Assamese lexicons thus present a faithful picture of the language that lives on the lips of the people. But they are very poor in etymological materials. The derivations wherever suggested are more often than not fanciful. And at the present state of knowledge about Assamese such inaccuracies in lexicographers are inevitable."

The learned writer, claiming his own work to be just "a record of humble works", states that it "embodies all that has even been seriously attempted in the direction of grouping linguistic materials under different grammatical and historical categories." Surely these materials would furnish the comparative grammarians with systematic information about the formation of the Assamese language as he expects.

Kakati was confronted with a difficulty insofar as the problem of collection of materials from Early Assamese sources was concerned.

He knew that the texts of the old religious literature printed and published till his time were only meant primarily for popular consumption and were, therefore, just "careless transcripts of manuscripts without notes or glossarial indexes", reproduced without the least knowledge of, or care for, Textual Criticism. It could have been a colossal task had he to collect these materials strewn over the whole state and collate these. He had, therefore, to rest content by reading through and marking whole books and collating them with the original manuscripts in the custody of Kāmarūpa Anusandhān Samiti, Gauhati none of which manuscripts, however, seemed to be older than 150 years.

There was no previous historical study of the language; nor was any help available to Kakati by way of collection and sifting and selection of materials. Lonesomely had he to track his difficult path. For principles of NIA linguistics, of course, he could fall back upon his general precursors in the field. Frequently, he refers to the works of J. Bloch, S.K. Chatterji, G.A. Grierson and R.L. Turner, whose footsteps he follows assiduously almost all through the course of his study, while he acknowledges his indebtedness to other foregoing NIA studies named in the 'Select List of Books Consulted'.

Assamese is an Aryan language, but in its morphology and phonology it has the perceptible impact of non-Aryan languages. This influence had its particular significance and had to be analysed carefully. Kakati has a very important section on Non-Aryan Correspondences where parallelisms between Assamese and non-Aryan forms (Austrie and Mongolian in the main) have been drawn up; but at the same time some of these parallel Assamese words have been equated to Sanskrit formations. In these cases Kakati has refrained from a final analysis, for he says, "Classification of Sanskrit vocabulary is a vast issue, and that has been regarded as beyond the immediate scope of this publication."

Kakati's book was received with much attention and approbation by the world of linguists. Professor Dr. M.B. Emeneau of the University of California, Berkeley, published a detailed review of the work in the *Language* (Journal of the Linguistic Society of America), Berkeley, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1942, and appraised it as "a notable product of a good method," finding it "ground-breaking in many ways" with "superior statement" at places even over Professor Chatterji's.*

*I am very much tempted to make a resume of Professor Emeneau's clear-sighted critique or quote it *en extension*. The space at my command would how-

This indeed is high recognition of the intrinsic merits of Kakati's linguistic work.

Professor Kakati continued his linguistic studies even after the publication of *Assamese-Its Formation and Development* in the form of a few small papers, coming out in *The New Indian Antiquary*. In one paper (July 1938) he considered the Austric substratum in the Assamese language, and in another (June 1943) examined certain Austric-Sanskrit word-correspondences as in Sanskrit words of unknown origin like *Kāyastha*, *Vaṅgaśrī* as a suffix in river names, *Saumāra* and *Haya-griva*. Earlier S.K. Chatterji analysed place-names of Bengal from ancient inscriptions in his *ODBL* (S 42). Kakati takes up (February 1942) such place and personal names occurring in the copperplates (7th-12th cents.) of Kāmarūpa-Prāggyotisa, published in Padmanath Bhattacharya's *Kāmarūpa-śāsanavalī*, and tries to find out Austric and Mongoloid elements behind some of them. Even at the time of his death he was found engaged in working out equations for such terms as *Brāhmaṇa* and *Śūdra*. Language study was thus a passion with him all through his life.

Language study slowly assumed for him another meaning—that of a pointer for cultural pattern. In the paper, 'The Kalitā Caste of Assam' (*NIA*, II.5, 1939), he detects "probable instances of linguistic and other archaeological parallelisms, between Assam and South

ever not permit me to do either. Emeneau starts on a note of regret: "The study of the comparative and historical grammar of the Indo-Aryan vernaculars is not a subject that engages many workers." He refers, however, to Bloch's *La Formation* (1920) and Chatterji's *ODBL* (1926) (besides adding in a footnote Grierson's incomplete *Modern Indo-Aryan Vernaculars* printed as supplement to *The Indian Antiquary*, 1931-1933. Bloch's sketch *L'indo aryen* (1934), and Turner's *Nepali-English Dictionary*, 1931, as also Saksena's *Evolution of Awadhī*, which he has not seen) and would add Kakati to the list, "It derived its inspiration from Chatterji and his work, and it is a notable product of a good method, the performance of linguistic work on Indian languages with training derived either at first or at second hand from the linguistic schools of the West."

What Dr Emeneau says by way of criticism may perhaps be very useful to the future workers in the field:

"Dr Kakati's work is ground-breaking in many ways. He has examined and excerpted for his historical study much, if not all, of the early Assamese literature (it begins in the 14th century), a task that had not been touched before. For vernacular lexical and grammatical material he had printed sources, the lexicons apparently being fair to good in quality. The descriptive grammatical material, however, is apparently not too good, and we may suspect that the author was forced to work out a certain amount of this for himself. It is not clear whether

India "to augment his surmise that the Kalitā, "a people of undetermined origin in Assam", "representing the main bulk of the fully Aryanised population", migrated from the South and to dislodge the generally believed *kula-i-pta* hypothesis, which holds that the Kalitās are Kshatriyas degrading themselves as a subterfuge for fear of Kshatriya-annihilating Parasurama. For some time anterior to the publication of Kakati's paper in the *JA*, writers were trying to probe the origin of the Kalitā in articles published in *The Journal of Assam Research Society*, in 1933 and 1935. Kakati now took up the subject for a study in a small publication in Assamese, *Kalitā Jātir Itivṛtta*, 1941, and even though he was not able to bring out conclusive evidences, he puts forward sufficient sociological materials for a broad view of the problem of the Kalitā.

Kakati attempted an historical interpretation of the Śākta faith as revealed in its principal texts, the *Kālikā-purāṇa*, a tantra considered to have been written in Kāmarūpa or in some contiguous tract about the 11th or 12th century, and the *Yoginī-tantra*, apparently written in Kāmarūpa in the late 16th century. He takes up this study as a sort of backdrop to the great cultural movement started by Śaṅkaradeva in the 15th-16th centuries. He tries to read a starting point for the history of Assam in the story of Narakāsura as re-told in the *Kālikā-purāṇa* and link this figure with the kings of the Puṣyavarman family claiming descent from him. The Professor places Narakāsura in the 2nd century A.D. and takes it as the date when a major attempt to aryanise Assam, otherwise a prominently Mongoloid area, was made by settling *doiṇas* in the land.

he did field-work or its equivalent for his statements on the dialects of Assamese; the dialect specimens (24-31) seem to indicate that speakers of various dialects were used. No comparative treatment of Assamese had ever been attempted; the nearest approach to this is citation of a few forms and statement of a few equivalences in Chatterji's and Grierson's works.

"The total result of the enormous amount of labor that Dr Kakati must have expended is excellent, and none of the few criticisms that we shall have to make must be taken as detractions from this judgment. It might have resulted in clearer statement at times if the author had allowed a longer time to elapse between the completion of his thesis and his sending it to press and if he had spent the interval in the labor of 'the file' which the hurry incidental to preparing a thesis so often precludes. As it turned out, the printing was seriously hampered by restrictions necessitated by the present war; if Dr. Kakati's work had not gone to press when it did, its appearance would undoubtedly have been postponed for a very long period.

Kakati has placed these studies in Saktism in particular and the ancient religion and society of Assam in general in two works—*The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā*, 1948, in English, and *Purāṇi Kāmārūper Dharṁar Dhārā*, 1955, in Assamese. It is significant that just on the dedication page of the English publication he cites the *Yoginī-tantra*, 2.9.13, to say that the religion in the spiritual domain of Kamakhya is of Mongoloid origin. In the initial chapter on the land and the people, while pointing out early references to Assam as Kamarupa and Pragjyotisa in Sanskrit texts, he tries to equate elements in such names to Austric formations—a method he had earlier adopted in his *Assamese—Its Formation and Development*, where such names as Kāmākhyā, Lohit or Luit (Lauhitya or Brahmaputra) are sought to be given Austric moorings. He attempts at an historical interpretation of Saivism as found in the two regional Sanskrit texts, and links it up with modern references. He analyses the different motifs behind the concept of the Devi, classifying them into the Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā, the spouse Goddess Ekajaṭā or Tikṣṇakāntā or Tāmreśvarī, and the Great Goddess of great power and many names and forms. Late Buddhistic contamination also is suggested by such names as Tārā,

“On comparison with Chatterji’s treatment of Assamese, it is clear that our author has worked independently and has sometimes given a superior statement. § 273 states : whenever the vowel ā is found in the antepenultimate or in any anterior syllable (apparently counting syllables according to the OIA form of the word), it is shortened when any of the succeeding syllables contains ā; e.g. *pānī* ‘water’ : *panīyā* ‘watery’; *rajā* ‘king’ Skt. *rāja* +—. Instead of this, Chatterji refers (94) to the influence of non-initial stress (for *rajā*, etc.) as a trait common to Assamese and Oriyā, and (96) to weakening of long vowels when words are extended or compounded, as a feature common to Central Magadhan and West Magadhan and found in Eastern and Western Hindi as well, with examples (from what language ?) *pānī* ‘water’ : *panīā* ‘watery’ *panī-hār* ‘water-carrier.’

“This statement is one of Kakati’s arguments (7-8) against Chatterji for considering Assamese a separate language on all fours with Bengali, rather than closely connected with Bengali to form one member (Bengali-Assamese) of Eastern Magadhan, with Oriyā the other member. Certainly, Kakati’s best arguments are those cases in which Assamese and Oriyā agree with one another against Bengali (as they do in the statement of § 273). The other distributions of this kind given by him are in the words for ‘fire’ and ‘water’, in the fact that ‘Assamese has a complete set of negative conjugation with the negative particle *na-* placed before the verb root, Oriyā has a negative conjugation’, and finally in the fact that Assamese follows the pan-Indian system of penultimate stress while Bengali has initial stress. Even this last however is not quite so simple as that, since the Kāmārūpi dialect of Assamese has initial stress. Without a study of the Oriyā facts, it is probably a question impossible to settle, but it may be that we have in Eastern Magadhan merely a large area with three standard languages and many

Ugratārā and Ekajāṭā. Kakati thus obtains the cult of the Devī for a modern analysis. In the final section of both his above books he reverts to Vaiṣṇavism, to which even the Śākta texts make notable references, and ends with the 'Break with the Mother' and the 'New Discipline' that was brought in by the great Sankaradeva movement, which the learned writer considers the culmination and consummation of all earlier movements. "Thus Sankaradeva has given Assam a new life, letters and a state. Rulers have come and gone and their kingdoms perished in the dust, but Sankara's state endures and broad in the general hearts of men his power survives." For him thus Sankaradeva is *the* focal point in the social history of Assam.

Sankaradeva is a subject, Kakati's fascination for which never seems to have exhausted itself. Earlier in his career he made a thin (just 32 pages) but precious work, *Sankara Deva*, 1923, for G.A. Natesan & Co., Madras, still earlier contained in *The Indian Review* and later incorporated in the Company's publication, *Chaitanya to Vivekananda*, 1928. This gives an extremely readable account of Sankaradeva and his neo-Vaisnavism with its rigid but excellent *dāsya-bhakti* mode.

isoglossal lines separating off local dialects, but no bundles of isoglosses so thick that it becomes possible to say that here Assamese ends and Bengali begins or here Bengali ends and Oṛiyā begins. Comparison of the relative degree of bunching of isoglosses at two suspected points might determine relative closeness of relationship in either Chatterji's or Kakati's sense. Certainly, it seems that at the moment we have no presentation of the facts that is probative one way or the other.

"One of the interesting types of change described in the book is the deaspiration in § 358; I have attempted to work out an exact statement on the basis of the material given (my statement will hold only if the material given includes all the possible contexts). Of two aspirated stops in the same word, the second loses its aspiration, except that when the first, being in initial position, is the reflex of OIA sibilant + stop, the first loses its aspiration; e.g. *ākhudī* 'drug' <Skt. *auṣadhi*—, *bhikahu* 'beggar' > Skt. *bhikṣā* + —, *kāndh* 'shoulder' <Skt. *skandha*—, *tadhā*, 'amazed' <Skt. *stabdha*. A similar rule works when an aspirated stop follows initial [x], which represents the Sanskrit sibilants, and initial [s], which represents Sanskrit *c* and *ch*; the stop is deaspirated. When words in Standard Assamese show phenomena that contradict these statements, they are borrowed words from the Kāmrūpī dialect in which the rules do not hold, e.g. *sāṭhan* 'ability' <Skt. *saṁsthāna*—, or borrowed words showing the Kāmrūpī aspiration of OIA stops after [x] representing the Sanskrit sibilants or in the neighborhood of an aspirate, e.g. *śolokh* 'a verse' <Skt. *śloka*—. During the Early Assamese period the dominant kingdom in the linguistic area was the Koch kingdom in the west, where Kāmrūpī is spoken; it was only later, circa 17th century, that political and linguistic prestige passed to the Ahom kingdom in the east and later still, early 19th century, that missionary activity more firmly established the eastern Assamese dialect as the standard literary language.

In the concluding remarks he draws our attention to how Sankaradeva reclaimed Assam to the main current of Indian life and culture. "As a social force, Assam Vaishnavism has been working with marvellous success for about four hundred years, and that too without any symptom of degradation. The strict elimination of women from the religious gatherings of men is a strong point in this school. It widened the pale of Hindu community, receiving adherents from any religion and gave a wider range to social activities. It has fostered the ideas of brotherhood and equality amongst all men and acted as a strong solvent of hateful distinctions."

When all sorts of misconstructions were imposed upon the teaching of Sankaradeva and the history of his faith round about 1920 through onslaughts in the form of writings in a monthly, *Asam-Pradīpika*, Banikanta, then a youthful young teacher of Cotton College, took up the cudgel as he assumed the pen-name, Bhavananda Pathak, to write a series of eighteen articles with the caption 'Bijuli' (Lightning) in defence of Sankaradeva in the Lakshminath Bezbaroa-edited monthly *Bāhī*, Vol. XI, No. 7 (Kartika, 1842 Saka) to Vol. XII, No. 3 (Āṣāḍha, 1843 Saka). As the cloud of controversy rose and spread, bitter and incisive became the invectives of both Bezbaroa and Kakati.

"The chief fault to be found is undoubtedly concerning the manner in which forms are quoted. In Chapter I (Sounds and Letters) we are given a list (incomplete) of the unitary phonemes and a statement of the equivalences between them and the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet used in writing Standard Assamese. The writing is historical rather than phonemic; e.g. three sibilants are written (s, ś, ṣ) but in practically all contexts they are represented by the one phoneme [x], while the written c and ch are represented by the one phoneme [s]; written t and ṭ are represented by an alveolar phoneme [t]; written d and initial ḍ are represented by an alveolar phoneme [d]; written r and non-initial ḍ are represented by a trilled phoneme [r]. Unfortunately, forms are quoted only in a transcription of the traditional writing. In the case of vowels this leads to many uncertainties, and in all cases the reader is much hindered in finding his way around and being sure that he understands. It would have been preferable to give both a phonemic writing and a transcription of the traditional writing. It is to be hoped that this fault will be eradicated if Dr. Kakati publishes his book in a second edition."

This second edition, as envisaged by Emeneau, has largely been achieved by our esteemed colleague, Dr G.C. Goswami, who, while at work, had this great linguist's constructive suggestion in view.

Emeneau then concludes : "Other features of the book tempt one to comment in detail, e.g. the modest but very suggestive treatment of loan words from neighboring languages. I must content myself, however, with reiterating that this is an important book in Indo-Aryan comparative and historical grammar and with the wish that we may see more such studies by the author and by other Indian scholars."

But Kakati's scholarship was never found wanting. He brought in the Upanisads and the history of Vaisnavism particularly in the South to marshal his views. It is needless to add that the battle was decided in favour of these two exponents of the neo-Vaisnava faith, the antagonists either fleeing the ground or expressing ample regrets. One thing, however, may be noted here in the passing : that Kakati found close parallels between Sankaradeva and Ramanujacarya, and perhaps drags it a bit too far. Sankaradeva does not betray any acquaintance with Ramanuja's works, and his mysticism is far removed from the *pariṇāmavāda* doctrine of the South Indian saint. Kakati, however, persists in his fancy for the parallelism even as late as in his mature work, *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā* (§§ 67-72).

Kakati tried to find modern interpretations of different religious concepts of the Hindus, in his *Visnuite Myths and Legends* and even though earlier orientalists, both Indian and Western, had tried their hands in the subject, the Assamese scholar carves out his own niche and really has something fresh to throw in from his end, even though he makes the statement : "The essays themselves are hardly more than a series of extracts and quotations from standard publications." But as he himself says, "they have been so arranged as to shed some light upon a particular hypothesis." He works from the general hypothesis that there are extra-Indo-Aryan motifs in the ancient myths and legends of ancient India, many of these motifs floating down the centuries in the form of folk-lore and folk-belief. He makes "explorations in correspondence and parallelism" insofar as some Vaisnava concepts of gods are concerned, drawing mainly upon European and Indian source materials of varied description. All this makes very refreshing reading, extending our mental horizon to the east and to the west. It is only a pity that not much notice of this work of Kakati has been taken in wider orientologist circles in India and abroad, to whom it is really a fine gift.

If Sankaradeva contributed to the spread of oriental culture and literature four centuries back by building up a massive renaissance, based on the Visnuite faith, and introduced India to Assam in depth, Banikanta Kakati was one of the few persons who acted up to the revival of that legacy, which still holds the eastern zone to India. He established the identity and uniqueness of the Assamese language, obtaining it scientifically for a study by linguists of the world and his work would be of supreme importance when the future worker takes up the study of the comparative and historical grammar of the Indo-Aryan tongues.

Banikanta Kakati : A Note on AFD

D. P. Pattanayak

Banikanta Kakati is a multi-splendoured genius. His writings demonstrate the breadth of his interest. Linguistics, literature, folklore, culture, in short all aspects of Assamese life found voice in him. His study of the formation and development of Assamese led the foundation for the scientific study of Neo-Indo-Aryan languages at a time when the scanty source material was confined to the work of Jules Bloch, S.K. Chatterji, Baburam Saxena and S.M. Katre. He wrote at a time when even the independent identity of Assamese as a language was being challenged and material regarding Assamese was so scarce that earlier scholars like Beams and Hoernle did not even mention Assamese as an NIA language spoken in North India. He had to face scholarly ambivalence regarding the status of Assamese both within and without the Assamese speaking area including no less a scholar than Sir George Grierson. In spite of all these, his contribution will remain a crowning tribute to his scholarship.

A source of major strength as well as weakness in Kakati's *Assamese : Its Formation and Development* (AFD) is his indebtedness to Chatterji 'beyond measure'. As a result of this he could not go all the way in repudiating Chatterji's wrong views. For example, Chatterji has interpreted Hiuentasang's remarks regarding Kalinga, Banga and Kamarupa in different ways to suit his theory.¹ Dr. Kakati seems to be aware of this. But probably because of Chatterji's recognised scholarship and pervasive influence he could not call it a mistake. However, his presentation of material in this work was so good that Prof. M.B. Emeneau acknowledged his 'superior judgment over Chatterji's at places'.²

Another example of the same sort is the discussion of the name Assam. It is true that he has differed with Chatterji and examined all the conjectures and evidences in this regard. But he has refrained from making an unequivocal statement. It is possible that the word

1. Pattanayak D.P., 'Early Aryanisation of Orissa', OHRJ 7:1.51 ff (1958)

2. Emeneau, M.B., Review, Language, 18:3.245-8 (1942)

is a Tai compound or a compound of a Tai word with an Aryan prefix meaning undefeated, referring to either land or people. It is possible that the word was prevalent among the people who wanted to proclaim their superiority over those acknowledging subjects status. This has a parallel in the Koraput District of Orissa, where all tribals excepting one group are known by the term *Parajā*, 'the subjects people'. The one group of Khonds known as *Kuvi* mean fearless, undaunted, undefeated. Probably the Tai rulers used the prevalent term meaning undefeated for the land to pacify the populace. In any case, following the directionality of sound change in the language one has to conclude that the Ahom kings were so named after *Asam* which was the prevalent nomenclature for the land and/or the people rather than the other way about. A change from $s > h$ is natural and the native phonology will not tolerate positing a change from $h > s$. Development of Assam from Ahom will require a fanciful conjecture of hyper sanskritisation, an argument which has no leg to stand on.

Kakati, as has been indicated earlier, had to struggle for establishing an identity for Assamese separate from Bengali. As a result, while ably pointing out the divergences of Assamese from Bengali he had to refrain from pointing out the closeness of relationship. It is true that Assamese and Oriya retain many ancient features and to superficial observation appear closer. But comparative reconstruction has conclusively demonstrated that Assamese and Bengali are more closely related to each other than either of them to Oriya.³ In other words, if one makes statements on the basis of phonological reconstruction regarding the divergences of these three languages, one will have to recognise that Oriya showed distinctiveness from the proto stage leaving AB as one speech tract. Further phonological changes in the Assamese area separated Assamese from Bengali. This lack of perspective is probably what led K.C. Chatterjee⁴ to remark somewhat harshly that Kakati was "at pains to prove to the satisfaction of his fellow provincials speaking Assamese that Assamese has greater affinities with the western languages like Hindi than with Bengali".

In conclusion, it may be said that though weak in descriptive grammatical material and methodology of comparative reconstruction, the AFD will remain a monumental work in historical Indo-Aryan.

3. Pattanayak D.P., *A Controlled Historical Reconstruction of Oriya, Assamese, Bengali and Hindi*. Mouton & Co. The Hague, 1966.

4. Chatterjee, K.C., Review, OLD 5:4 May 1942.

A Note on the Synchronic Description of Assamese Sounds in Kakati's AFD

Tabu Taid

I

Phonological studies have come a long way since 1935, the year in which Kakati's AFD¹ was accepted as a thesis for the Ph.D. degree of the University of Calcutta. While the age-old phoneme holds its ground, its concept has ramified.² Qualitative and quantitative features of segmental phonemes have come to be studied in a highly sophisticated manner.³ The study of stress, juncture and intonation, too, are now considered as important aspects of phonological investigations.

With such developments in the field, it is quite natural for one now to discover glaring inadequacies in Kakati's treatment of Assamese phonology at the synchronic level. In a sense, this could not have been otherwise, for Kakati's concern with the synchronic description of Assamese sounds was only of a casual nature.⁴ In a historical study of the kind that AFD is, he could not possibly allow himself to be caught in a synchronic tangle. As a matter of fact, he seems to have been impatient with even the meagre amount of synchronic enquiry which he incorporated into AFD and to have felt at home only when he had the opportunity to delve deep into the historical aspect of his subject.

Thus, to talk about the synchronic aspect of Kakati's treatment of Assamese phonology is to talk about the weakest aspect of

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1. *Assamese, Its Formation and Development*. References of the book in this paper are to its first edition (1941).
 2. For a discussion on the *psychological, physical, functional and abstract* view of the phoneme, see E.C. Fudge in *New Horizons in Linguistics* (1970), edited by John Lyons.
 3. One can see touches of such relative sophistication in Dr G.C. Goswami's *An Introduction to Assamese Phonology* (1966) also.
 4. Only a short chapter of a little over eight pages has been devoted to the synchronic description of Assamese sounds in his 408-page AFD.

his great contribution to Assamese, and for that matter, to Indian, linguistics.⁵ But he also remains the first linguist to give a truly scientific account of the sounds in Assamese, sketchy though it is. He classified the Assamese consonants according to the place and the manner of their articulation and the vowels according to the position of the tongue at the time of articulation (i.e. whether it is the *front*, the *central* portion or the *back* of the tongue which is highest, and whether it is raised *close* to the palate or moved away from the palate rendering it *open*).⁶ The description of the individual sounds, particularly of the consonants, is also in conformity with some basic principles of articulatory phonetics. Assamese /t/, for instance, has been described as 'voiceless alveolar plosive', /d/ as 'voiced alveolar plosive', /k, g/ as 'unvoiced and voiced velar plosives', etc. Neither Kakati's predecessors nor his contemporaries, engaged in the study of the Assamese language, had ever achieved this accuracy in the description of Assamese sounds. Thus, even in his position as a descriptive linguist, which he was not, as already noted above, Kakati broke fresh ground in Assamese linguistics in his approach as well as in the use of linguistic terminology.

The superior merit of Kakati's description of Assamese sounds can be discerned easily when we compare his AFD with, say, *Asamiyā Vyākaraṇ āru Bhāṣātattva* by Kaliram Medhi,⁷ another devoted student of the Assamese language. This work of Medhi's, already recognised as an important contribution to Assamese linguistics, includes an account of Assamese pronunciation which is far from satisfactory. The account is characterised by a failure to discriminate between phonology and graphology. The Assamese vowels, for instance, have

5. Chronologically speaking, AFD was the fourth major systematic study of a modern Indian language along the principles of historical-comparative linguistics, the first three being Dr. Jules Bloch's *La Formation de la Langue Marathe* (1920), Dr. S.K. Chatterji's *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* (1926) and Dr. Baburam Saxena's *Evolution of Āwadhī* (1937).

6. AFD, P. 59

7. The birth centenary of Kaliram Medhi was celebrated on 16 and 17 October, 1978 by Asam Sahitya Sabha. About his *Asamiyā Vyākaraṇ āru Bhāṣātattva* (1936), Kakati has these words in the preface to his AFD: 'In 1936, as these pages were being made ready for the press, was published Mr. Kaliram Medhi's *Asamiya Vyakaran aru Bhasatattva*, written in Assamese. It is an ambitious work and is supposed to be written on historical principles. But though it contains a mass of early Assamese forms, the mode of approach to the subject is far from scientific and it does not place this publication under any obligation.'

been classified here into short ones (a, i, u) and long ones (\bar{a} , \bar{i} , \bar{u}), and according to the analysis given, the long ones are realised when some vowel gets deleted in a process of vowel conjunction, eg. *muni + indra = munindra*; *bhū + ūrddha = bhūrddha* etc. Now, this may be regarded as an account of Assamese orthography based on Sanskrit morphophonemics, but by no conceivable stretch of imagination can this be called an account of Assamese pronunciation. Medhi's list of diphthongs includes /e/ and /o/, which, he asserts, are 'diphthongs in reality'.⁸ /e/, according to him, is nothing but /a + ī/ (e.g. *Banga + īsvar = Bangesvar*) and /o/ is merely the resultant form of /a + u/ (e.g. *magha + una = maghona*). To describe /e/ and /o/ as diphthongs on such considerations is anything but sound linguistics. Again, a typical inaccuracy marks his observation regarding the alveolar plosives in Assamese : "Assamese speakers generally pronounce the dental sounds. But it does not mean that they do not use cerebral sounds. They do use cerebral sounds, but the distinction is not maintained in speech... We have adopted a pronunciation in between,"⁹ Apart from the fact that Assamese has hardly any purely dental or cerebral sound, one can easily see the difference between this kind of description and Kakati's description of Assamese /t/ as 'voiceless alveolar plosive', /d/ as 'voiced alveolar plosive' etc.

But, as suggested above, it is only natural that Kakati should have his own shortcomings in spite of the obvious superiority of his description of Assamese sounds to those of his predecessors and contemporaries. An attempt has been made below to point out some of these shortcomings.

II

Kakati begins his descriptive account with an inventory of the Assamese phonemes presented in a tabular form. The table for consonants shows seventeen phonemes, viz. /p, b, t, d, k, g, m, n, y, l, r, s, z, x, h, w, j/. The chart for vowel phonemes shows fourteen vowels, viz. /i, e, ε, a, o, u/ and their seven nasalised counterparts. This brings the total number of phonemes to thirty-one. But the figure given by Kakati is twenty-four.¹⁰ Obviously, he did not consider the

8. *Asamīyā Vyākaraṇ āru Bhāṣātattva* (2nd impression 1978) p. 9

9. *Ibid.*, p. 23

10. *AFD*, p. 60

seven nasalised vowels in the chart as 'essential phonemes in Assamese'. So the inclusion of the nasalised vowels in the phonemic chart may be considered superfluous.

Today, any student of Assamese phonology can see that Kakati's inventory of Assamese phonemes is faulty in at least two important respects. First, it is rather surprising that he failed to include the six aspirated stops, viz. /ph, bh, th, dh, kh, gh/ in the list of essential phonemes. The question of these sounds not being phonemes cannot arise, for all of them present contrasts with the unaspirated stops in all positions, eg :

/pat/	'leaf' ...	...	/phat/	'crack'
/bat/	'road' ...	...	/bhat/	'rice'
/tal/	'cymbal'	...	/thal/	'dish'
/dal/	'branch'	...	/dhal/	'shield'
/kal/	'time' ...	...	/khal/	'ditch'
/ga/	'body' ...	...	/gha/	'wound' " etc.

It is not at all likely that the phonemicity of the aspirated stops did not occur to him, for, apart from the clear appearance of these sounds in the table of consonants given in Dr S.K. Chatterji's ODBL,¹² which was the main source of Kakati's inspiration in undertaking a historical study of the Assamese language, the latter himself writes in the chapter on 'Sounds and letters', "There are the aspirates, ph, th, th, kh, bh, dh, dh which have separate letters and are therefore regarded as simple sounds."¹³ It is not clear what Kakati meant by 'simple sounds.' If, by that, he meant *phonemes*, the retroflex /ṭh/ and /ḍh/ would be out of place here because they are not phonemes in Assamese. Even otherwise, the statement is indefensible: we do not have separate sounds simply because we have separate letters; in fact, many Assamese graphemes have no individual phone-

11. For detailed illustrations of the contrasts in various positions, see *An Introduction to Assamese Phonology* (1966) by Dr. G.C. Goswami, pp. 11-14.

12. *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, (1970, p. 240).

13. AFD, p 62. Note that /gh/ is missing from the list of aspirates given here. The error must have crept in through inadvertence. /zh/ and /rh/ also occur as separate letters, but as the occurrence of /zh/ is very rare and /rh/ is best considered a sequence of /r/ and /h/ closely linked together they may not be accorded phonemic status. They should, however, receive some consideration as *phones*, though not as *phonemes*. Kakati ignored them altogether. Mr. Bisweswar Hazarika (*vide infra*), however, is in favour of according phonemic status to both these sounds.

mic significance whatsoever. But /ph, bh, th, dh, kh, gh/ are *simple-sounds* in Assamese, not because they have corresponding graphemes but because they have definite contrastive roles to play. Thus there can be no reason why the six aspirated stops should not have been shown in the phonemic chart.

Secondly, Kakati envisaged a well-balanced vowel system for Assamese, viz, three front vowels /i e ɛ/, three back /u o ɔ/ and one low central /a/.¹⁴ But there are four, and not three, back vowels in what may be called Assamese RP, i.e. educated Assamese speech, viz. /ɔ ɒ o u/.¹⁵ The phonemicity of these four vowels is clearly established by such contrasts as :

/kɔla/	'deaf'
/kɒla/	'black'
/kola/	'lap'
/kula/	'winnowing fan' etc.

Although Kakati shows /ɛ/ as a separate phoneme in his phonemic chart, he was probably not sure of its phonemic status, for when he comes to describe /ɛ/, he writes, "This is the usual sound value of the e-phoneme in Assamese,"¹⁶ This is to suggest that /ɛ/ is only an allophone of /e/. But such minimal contrasts as /kheɛd/ 'regret', /kheɔd/ 'drive away!'; /bes/ 'fine !', /bɛs/ 'price' etc. establish /ɛ/ as a distinct phoneme.

This gives us an Assamese phonemic system of twenty-three consonants and eight vowels, the total number of 'essential phonemes' being thirty-one, and not twenty-four as given by Kakati.

14. In some dialectal varieties of Assamese, such a balanced vowel system does, indeed, exist, with the difference that instead of the three back vowels /ɔ o u/, we come across /ɔ ɒ u/, /o/ being neutralized with either /u/ as in the speech of some social groups in upper Assam or with /ɔ/ as in the Kamrupi dialect, e.g. :—

Standard coll. Assamese	Upper Assam dialect	Kamrupi
/bhok/ 'hunger'	/bhuk/	/bhɔkh/
/dokan/ 'shop'	/dukan/	/dɔkan/
/kola/ 'lap'	/kula/	/kɔla/
/gotei/ 'the whole of'	/gutei/	/gɔtai/
/mor/ 'mine'	/mur/	/mɔr/ etc.

15. The symbols have been chosen to represent the contrasts without any reference to their exact values in the system of cardinal vowels.

16. AFD, P. 65. Although there are not many minimal pairs to establish the distinction between /e/ and /ɛ/ in the language, one is meticulously distinguished from the other in standard speech.

III

The absence of phonemic transcription of various words, affixes etc given in the body of the text remains an unsatisfactory feature of AFD. 17 Kakati chose to follow a scheme of transliteration about which he wrote, ".....as the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are used to represent these sounds, in the description given below the Assamese sounds are equated to the Sanskrit letters which symbolise them." 18 Thus, his *c* in *phēcā* 'owl', *ch* in *gach* and *s* in *sajinā* all refer to the same sound /s/ in Assamese; similarly, *s* in *si* 'he', *ś* in *Śiva* 'Lord Shiva', *ṣ* in *ṣolla* 'sixteen' represent the same phoneme /x/. While such a scheme of transliteration might be considered an integral part of the phylogenetic study of a language, it is not quite adequate for dealing with its phonology. On the contrary, such simple equations of Assamese sounds to Sanskrit letters have proved to be a stumbling-block, particularly for those who are not familiar with Assamese orthography. It is, therefore, quite natural that Professor M.B. Emeneau, while reviewing AFD in *Language*, vol. 18, No. 2, 1942, expressed his unhappiness over this aspect of Kakati's work.

IV

In describing the individual sounds, Kakati frequently indulges in equating, rather loosely, Assamese sounds with English sounds. While there can be no harm in comparing the similar sounds of two languages, it could be more misleading than illuminating if the differences between those apparently similar sounds are not noted properly. Therefore, when Kakati says that Assamese /a/ is 'a clear sound as in English *father, part*' (§ 117), we are likely to confuse Assamese /a/ with English /a:/, which are, in fact, different sounds in respect of both quality and quantity. Again, it is obviously misleading when he says that Assamese /o/, when long, 'has a sound as in English *vocation* : eg. *bhog*, enjoyment; *lo*, iron; *po*, child, etc' (§ 120), for

17. In the revised edition of AFD (1962), Dr. G.C. Goswami makes 'a sincere endeavour....to improve upon the work' (Preface to the revised edition) and does well to supply the phonemic shapes of various words and affixes given in the book, thus carrying out the suggestion of Professor M.B. Emeneau. But in his enthusiasm for 'improving upon' the work, he makes many alterations. Since he does not take care to explain each and every alteration, it is not always possible to see in the revised edition what exactly Kakati did.

18. AFD, P. 60

the /o/ of *bhog*, *lo* etc. has no similarity whatsoever with the /ou/ (alternatively /ɔ/) in the first syllable of *vocation*.¹⁹

Moreover, Kakati's description of some Assamese sounds suffers from other kinds of inaccuracies. The description of Assamese /x/ is a case in point. According to him, /x/ 'represents Sanskrit *s*, *ś*, *ṣ* in initial positions' (§ 103) and 'in non-initial positions in *tatsama* words they (ie. *ś*, *s*, *ṣ*,) are pronounced as *kh*' (§ III). He goes on to illustrate his point as follows:

Initial	: sakala	(all)	— xakal
	śara	(arrow)	— xar
	ṣolla	(sixteen)	— xolla
Non-initial	: asāra	(inconsequential)	— akhār
	vaśa	(subordination)	— bakh
	śeṣa	(end)	— xekh

It is true that in some non-standard forms of Assamese, /x/ is realised as [kh] non-initially,²⁰ and that it has allophonic variations even in the standard speech. But /x/ is never realised as [kh] in any position in Standard Colloquial Assamese. Thus *asāra* is /ɒxar/, *vaśa* is /bɒx/ and *śeṣa* is /xex/ in Standard Colloquial Assamese, not *akhār*, *bakh* and *xekh* as Kakati describes them. Therefore, Kakati's observation that Sanskrit *s*, *ś* and *ṣ* are phonetically realised as [kh] in non-initial positions is not acceptable.

Vowel length has no phonemic role in Assamese. But it does exist as a phonetic feature, which is yet to be discussed properly, let alone elaborately.²¹ Medhi does not seem to have been aware

19. Dr. G.C. Goswami makes the same kind of mistake when he observes that Assamese /ɔ/ is 'like *oa* as in *coat*, and *o* almost like *oa* as above with a little more lip rounding' (foot-note 11, *AFD*, 1962, p. 66), for neither Assamese /ɔ/ (as in /kɔt/ 'where', /bɔl/ 'let us go' etc.) nor Assamese /o/ (as in /mor/ 'mine', /tor/ 'yours' etc.) has any resemblance with the English diphthong /ou/ in *coat*.

20. In the Assamese speech of some dialectal groups of upper Assam, /x/, in general, is realised initially as [h] and non-initially as [kh], e.g. /xoru/ > [hɔru], /ɒxɒm/ > [ɒkhɒm] etc.

21. Even in his fairly sophisticated *An Introduction to Assamese Phonology*, Dr. G.C. Goswami does not duly emphasise the phenomenon of vowel length in Assamese. At 3.36 (p. 84), he says, 'All vowels have different degrees of length, which is allophonic according to their position of occurrences in a

of the existence of vowel length in Assamese as a phonetic feature; he discusses vowel length on orthographic considerations. Kakati, again, is the first Assamese linguist to have paid some attention to the quantitative aspect of Assamese vowels on purely phonetic grounds. He speaks of *i:* (long) and *i* (short), *u:* (long) and *u* (short), and of *o* (long) and *o* (short), not as orthographic entities but as phonetic realisations. However, he has not defined the phonetic environments in which these quantitative fluctuations take place. Moreover, he failed to illustrate his point properly. For instance, he illustrates the short *u* by *hul* 'thorn' and *guti* 'seed' and the long *u:* by *kuku:-hā* ('wild cock' according to Kakati, but actually a bird of the cuckoo family), *utanu:wa* 'rash', *kharu:* 'bracelet' and *garu:* 'pillow'. It is true that *u* in the second syllable of *kuku:ha*, *kharu:* and *garu:* is longer than in the first syllable of *guti* and *hul*.²² But *utanu:wa* is an odd man out, for apparently there is no reason why [*u*] in the third syllable of the word should be lengthened to [*u:*]²³; on the contrary, it is likely to be shortened, because it provides a glide to [*a*] (the phonemic shape of the word being /*utɔnua*/). Again, while *pit* 'bile'

word.' He, however, rightly associates vowel length with stress: "The primary stress has an allophone [*ˈ*] which is phonetically characterised by .. length of the vowel which is half long medially and long in open syllables medially and before a juncture finally" (p. 114). But these are not comprehensive statements about vowel length in Assamese, for it is not enough to associate vowel length with stress and say that the length varies according to the position of occurrence of vowels. In normal speech the vowel /*a*/ is longer in words like /*kam*/ 'work', /*kar*/ 'whose'?, /*bhat*/ 'rice', etc. than in words like /*kat*/ 'cut (it)!', /*dhal*/ 'pour (it)!', /*bhag*/ 'Be off!' etc. The quantitative variation in these words is due, neither to the position of occurrence of /*a*/ (it occurs in the same position in all the cases) nor to the phenomenon of stress (all the words carry the same word-stress), but to the lexical choice. Minimal pairs like /*pɔ:r*/ '(a period of) time' and /*pɔr*/ 'fall down', /*dha:l*/ 'shield' and /*dhal*/ 'pour (it)!', /*pi:t*/ 'yellow' and /*pit*/ 'beat!' etc. almost tempt one to suggest that vowel length in Assamese may even be phonemic, in a limited way though: limited, because the shorter vowels in such pairs are likely to be encountered only in verbs used in the imperative mood. But, it is evident that vowel length in Assamese needs a closer examination than what has been done about it hitherto.

22. The distinctive stress on the second syllable of *kukuha*, *kharu* and *garu* affects the quantitative aspect of /*u*/ in these words, making it longer than the unstressed [*u*] in *guti* and the indistinctly stressed [*u*] in *hul*. Even the indistinct stress on *hul* makes its [*u*] slightly longer than the [*u*] in the unstressed first syllable of *guti*. Kakati, in all probability, did not give much thought to this aspect of the effect of stress on vowel quantity in Assamese.
23. In /*utɔnua*/, the stress is on the second syllable. Therefore, it is [*ɔ*] that may undergo some quantitative modification.

and *khil* 'fallow land' as examples of *i* (short) and *kini:* 'having bought', *ni:* 'having taken', *si:* 'having sewn' and *piri:ka* 'pimples' as examples of *i:* (long) are quite acceptable, *i:tar* 'common' and *si* 'he' are wrong examples of *i:* and *i* respectively. [*i*] in /xi/ 'he' occurs in a stressed open syllable and is, therefore, slightly longer than the [*i*] occurring in the unstressed first syllable of /itor/.

About the phoneme /o/, Kakati says : 'The *o*-phoneme has two values in Assamese, long and short.' His 'long (o)' is exemplified by words like *lo* 'iron', *po* 'child' etc. and his 'short (ō)' is to be found in words like *mōh* 'buffalo'. It should, however, be obvious that what he thought of as two different values of the same phoneme /o/ are really two different phonemes, not the long and short variants of the same phoneme. It is an instance of Kakati's failure to discriminate vowel quality from vowel quantity. But it must be added in the same breath that in discussing vowel length in Assamese from the phonetic point of view rather than from the orthographic, Kakati introduced into the study of Assamese phonology a fairly advanced concept.

V

Of the supra-segmental features of Assamese phonology, Kakati deals only with stress.²⁴ But there is practically nothing synchronic about his treatment of stress in Assamese. The couple of synchronic observations that he makes regarding stress in Standard Colloquial Assamese and the Kamrupi dialect in Western Assam are far from adequate. "The stress in the Kamrupi dialect in western Assam," he writes, "is dominantly initial whereas the stress in the Standard colloquial of eastern Assam is medial. The stress in the Standard colloquial seems to fall in a line with the prevailing pan-Indian system in being placed on the penultimate" (§ 124, p. 69). He reaffirms : ".....in the Kamrupi dialect, the stress always falls on the first syllables in all classes of words." (§ 153, p. 82) These observations on stress in Standard colloquial Assamese and the Kamrupi dialect are not only not comprehensive but also rather inaccurate. To describe stress in Standard colloquial Assamese as 'medial' is to exclude the very large number of disyllabic words that can have only initial and final syllables. Nor is it precise to describe it as 'being placed on the

24. Kakati includes the nasalised vowels in his phonemic chart, but nowhere does he discuss their phonemicity. Nasalisation in general is treated from the historical point of view.

penultimate'', for it is not true of a large number of disyllabic words and words having more than three syllables. It is only in the case of the majority of trisyllabic words that stress in Standard colloquial Assamese is 'medial' or 'penultimate'.

Word stress in Assamese, which is not as prominent as in English, is yet to be studied exhaustively. Dr. G.C. Goswami, while presenting a "tentative"²⁵ analysis of Stress in Assamese in his *An Introduction to Assamese Phonology* (pp. 112-118), has discarded Kakati's description of Assamese Stress as being 'medial' or 'penultimate' and has rightly observed that "the position of the primary stress is either the first or the second syllable". But he has not analysed the phonetic environments that determine the occurrence of the primary stress in the first syllable or the second. It is seen, for instance, that most words having more than two syllables carry the stress on the second syllable, eg.

/pɔr'libar/	(3 syllables)	'wife'
/brɔh'mɔputrɔ/	(4 syllables)	'the Brahmaputra'
/xɔr'ɔbɔrɔhi/	(5 syllables)	'amiable'
/mɔh'apuruxia/	(6 syllables)	'of the cult of Shri Sankara-deva' etc

Important exceptions to this rule are imitation words (eg., 'tirbirɔni' 'twinkling,' 'bhɔkbhɔkɔni' 'the sound of water boiling in a pot'; 'sinnɔbhinno' 'helter skelter', etc), compound words²⁶ (eg. 'gɔlbisoni' 'dewlap' 'kɔlpɔtia' 'of the colour of plantain leaves' etc) and words with vowel clusters²⁷ in the first syllable (e.g. 'aɔhɔtia' 'out of the way'; 'deɔbɔria' 'of or on Sundays' etc).

25. *An Introduction to Assamese Phonology*, p. 112, footnote.

26. In the case of imitation words and compound words, the stress is generally determined by the first element of a word. If the first element is monosyllabic or carries the stress on the first syllable, the whole word is stressed on the first syllable, as can be seen from the examples cited. If, however, the first element is stressed on the second syllable, the whole word carries the primary stress on the second syllable, e.g. /se'delibhedeli/ 'helter skelter', /mɔ'ɲɔlbɔria/ 'of or on Tuesdays', etc.

27. The first member of such vowel clusters should be lower than the following member(s), as exemplified. If the second member of the cluster is lower than the first, it (i.e. the second member) may be treated as a part of the second syllable and accordingly the stress may be said to be on the second syllable, e.g. /du'ɔri/ 'door-keeper'; /pɔ'ali/ 'young ones' etc.

Disyllabic words do not lend themselves to easy formulation. The following patterns may, however, be noted :—

Pattern I : Words with simpler syllabic structures, viz. (c)v₁v₂(c), generally carry the stress on the second syllable, e.g.

v ₁ v ₂	/a'da/	'ginger'
v ₁ v ₂ c	/a'bhax/	'hint'
c ₁ v ₁ v ₂	/bha'xa/	'language'
c ₁ v ₁ v ₂ c	/bi'lax/	'luxury' etc.

A large number of Assamese disyllabic words belong to this group.

Pattern II : When the first v of (c)v₁v₂(c) is a diphthong with a lower first member, the stress falls on the first syllable, eg.

v ₁ v ₂	/'eito/	'this'
c ₁ v ₁ v ₂	/'deuka/	'wing'
c ₁ v ₁ v ₂ c	/'raidan/	'a kind of cane' etc.

Pattern III : When the second v of (c)v₁v₂(c) is a diphthong with a lower first member, the word carries the stress on the second syllable, eg.

v ₁ v ₂	/a'moi/	'father's friend's wife'
c ₁ v ₁ v ₂	/gha'toi/	'ferryman'
c ₁ v ₁ v ₂ c	/gha'toik/	'ferryman (Accusative)' etc.

Pattern IV : When v²⁸ in (c)v(c) is a vowel cluster with a lower second member, the word is stressed on the second syllable, eg.

v	/u'a/	'(an expression of surprise)'
cv	/bhu'a/	'falsehood'
cvc	/du'ar/	'door'
cvc	/kõor/	'prince' etc.

Pattern V²⁹ : Words with initial and medial consonant clusters tend to be stressed on the first syllable, e.g.

vccv	/'atma/	'soul'
cvccv	/'dɔgdhɔ/	'burnt'
vccvc	/'ɔrzu/	'Arjun'
cvccvc	/'gɔhbɔr/	'cave'
ccvccv	/'grɔnthɔ/	'book'
ccvccvc	/'prantɔr/	'field'

28. This v should be really treated as vv (see footnote 27 above).

29. Patterns VI and VII are exceptions in relation to Pattern V.

Pattern VI : Words with the structure *ccvcvc* carry the stress on the second syllable, particularly when the second *c* happens to be *r*, e.g.

<i>ccvcvc</i>	<i>/srɔ'mik/</i>	'labourer'
"	<i>/bhrɔ'mɔn/</i>	'travelling'
"	<i>/prɔ'man/</i>	'proof' etc.

Pattern VII : Words with the syllabic structure *cvccv* carry the stress on the second syllable, when the medial cluster *cc* is *nd* or *ndh* occurring in a verb or in words used in very homely speech and style, e.g.

<i>cvccv</i>	<i>/ran'dhe/</i>	'(he/they etc) cook(s)'
"	<i>/kan'da/</i>	'(you) weep'
"	<i>/pin'dhō/</i>	'(I/we) wear'
"	<i>/ban'dhɔ/</i> ³⁰ (both noun and verb)	'friend' (N), '(you) bind', (V) etc.

Pattern VIII : Words with three-consonant clusters, viz. *cccvcv(c)* or *(c)vcccv(c)*, carry the stress on the first syllable.

<i>cccvcv(c)</i>	<i>/'smritit/</i>	'in memory'
"	<i>/'spriha/</i>	'eagerness'
"	<i>/'stroino/</i>	'hen-pecked'
<i>(c)vcccv(c)</i>	<i>/'ɔndhrɔ/</i>	'Andhra'
"	<i>/'sɔndrɔ/</i>	'the moon'
"	<i>/'mɔntrik/</i>	'minister (Accusative)'
"	<i>/'xɔstrik/</i>	'with one's wife'
"	<i>/'xɔntrax/</i> ³¹	'terror'
"	<i>/'bɔndhja/</i>	'barren'

It is seen that many *tatsama* words with comparatively complex syllabic structures like */prantor/*, */prɔstor/*, */brahmɔn/*, */nitjɔ/*, */xɔtjɔ/* etc. are stressed on the first syllable, whereas their *tadbhava* counterparts with simpler syllabic structures are stressed on the second syllable: */pɔthar/*, */pathɔr/*, */bamun/*, */nitou/*, */xɔsa/*, etc. This indicates the importance of the syllabic structure of words in Assamese stress patterns.

30. Dr. G.C. Goswami puts the stress on the first syllable for */bandhɔ/* 'friend'; but in the rural speech of Upper Assam, the stress can be frequently heard on the second syllable.

31. Dr. G.C. Goswami has the stress of this word on the second syllable, which sounds a bit theatrical.

In the case of monosyllabic words, the addition of suffixes often shifts the stress from the first syllable to the second, e.g.

/ʔzon/	'the moon'
/zo'nɔk/	'to the moon' (accusative)
/zo'nɔ|ɔi/	'to the moon'
/zo'nɔ|ɔikehe/	'only to the moon' etc.
(But, /ʔzonto/	'the moon')

These are purely tentative observations on Assamese stress patterns and there may be many exceptions to these generalisations.³² But they would readily suggest that it is not useful enough to talk of Assamese stress being 'medial' or 'penultimate' as Kakati has done.

Kakati's affirmation that ".....in the Kamrupi dialect, the stress always falls on the first syllables in all classes of words" is not quite acceptable, because one can easily cite many examples of Kamrupi words stressed on the second syllable (e.g. /a'pi/ 'girl'; /a'ti/ 'grandfather'; /pa'thar/ 'meadow'; /kha'lak/ 'has eaten', etc.). The reduction of most trisyllabic words of the standard colloquial into disyllabic words in the Kamrupi dialect³³ may not be simply due to the prominent stress on the first syllable of such words, as Kakati would have it; it may also be due to the general tendency in the Kamrupi dialect not to have trisyllabic words with the syllabic structure (c)vɛvɛv(c), which is reduced to disyllabic (c)vɛv(c), the second v being either simply omitted or transposed to form a diphthong with the

32. e.g., *barv* 'twelve' and *terv* 'thirteen' are exceptions to the rule that disyllabic words with the syllabic structure (c)vɛv carry the stress on the second syllable. They have probably been influenced by the stress pattern of the surrounding words, *e'gharv* 'eleven', *'sɔidhɔv* 'fourteen' *pon'dhɔrv* etc. which carry the stress on the penultimate syllable.

33. e.g.

Standard	colloquial	Kamrupi	
/pa ^h eri/	/p ^h ahri/	'having forgotten'
/bɔ ^r ali/	/b ^h alli/	'a kind of fish'
/u ^h ghale/	/u ^h ghle/	'uproot'
/ko ^m ora/	/k ^h umra/	'cucumber'
/ke ^t ia/	/k ^h eitɪ/	'when' etc.

It may be useful to note that these reduced Kamrupi forms conform to stress patterns V and II (in the case of the last example) given above. In other words, once they are reduced, they do not show any substantial divergence from the Standard Colloquial in respect of their stress.

list v.³⁴ This, however, is only a casual suspicion, not a systematic finding. A systematic study, I am sure, would reveal many interesting features of the phenomenon of stress in the Kamrupi dialect, which may not conform to Kakati's formulation.

VI

I would like to iterate in conclusion that the lacunas in Kakati's synchronic account of Assamese phonology discussed here do in no way belittle his magnificent contribution to Assamese linguistics. Apart from his undoubtedly being one of the few and finest scholars that India produced in the field of historical and comparative linguistics in the early decades of this century, he will always live to be—the most important pioneer in synchronic studies of the Assamese language.

34. Vide examples under footnote 33.

Diachronic Treatment of Assamese Phonology in Assamese : Its Formation and Development.

Bheweswar Hazarika

Banikanta Kakati has studied diachronically the phonology of Assamese in chapters I to XI of *Assamese : Its Formation and Development*. He has endeavoured there to study and classify the phonetic laws which account for the phonetic changes from OIA to Assamese. In doing so, he has opened up new vistas of study in this field.

In § 90 he has analysed the principal Assamese phonemes, which according to him are 31, that is, 14 vowels and 17 consonants. The Vowels he has shown are : $i, \bar{i}, e, \bar{e}, \bar{ɛ}, a, \bar{a}, o, \bar{o}, u, \bar{u}$ and the consonants are $p, b, t, d, k, g, m, n, y, l, r, s, z, x, h, \delta$ (w) and \tilde{e} (j). He has not shown the back low vowel ϖ as a distinct phoneme in Assamese, but has shown as an allophone of ϖ . It is, however, a distinct phoneme in Assamese as the following contrasts show :—

cōra 'high' but *cōra* 'a sitting room',

dol 'an aquatic grass' but *dol* 'a shrine, temple'

mōh 'mosquito' but *mōh* 'buffalo' etc.

In § 90, he has left out the phonemes *ph, bh, th, dh, kh, gh,* and *rh*. Though left out there, he has discussed them in § 107. But he has left out *gh* there too. Kakati has left out *zh* altogether, but *zh* is also a phoneme in Assamese, not an allophone of *z*. The following contrasts will show it :

zāō 'I go' but *zhāō* 'tamarix Indica'

He holds that *x* represents OIA. $\dot{s}, \dot{\bar{s}}, s_x$ in the initial position only (§ 103). But we find *x* representing OIA. $\dot{s}, \dot{\bar{s}}, s_x$ in all positions; e.g. *ālakāt* [oxokot] 'lean and thin', *kayati* [koxoti] 'touch-stone', *āār* [oxar] 'sapless' in medial, and *pas* [pox] 'to enter', *haris* [horix] 'pleasure' and *palas* [pox] 'soft mud deposited by river flood' in final positions.

It is evident from the above that though Kakati's analysis of Assamese phonemes is a pioneering work in the history of Assamese

phonetics, yet all of his conclusions cannot be accepted without any critical scrutiny. His use of traditional and phonetic transcriptions in the same book has also created confusions.

STRESS-ACCENT

Analysing the role of stress-accent in the changes of OIA vowels into Assamese, Kakati has formulated the following rules :

1. Vowels in accented open syllables except ai, au and r remain unchanged (§ 128);
2. Vowels in accented closed syllables are lengthened (§ 129);
3. When carrying the secondary stress of the word, short vowels remain unaltered, long vowels are shortened and consonant groups are simplified without compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowels (§ 130);
4. Unaccented vowels in the absolute beginning and between the primary and secondary stress have a tendency to disappear (§ 131);
5. Unaccented vowels preceding the main stress and the vowel following the primary stress in a trisyllabic word, a short vowel loses its timbre and a long vowel its length (§ 131).

Kakati's example of a long vowel carrying the secondary stress being shortened is the *cā* of OIA *cākravāka* being *ca* of As. *cakowā* 'ruddy goose' (§ 130). The *ca* of OIA *cakravāka* is not a long vowel and, therefore, the question of it being shortened in the *ca* of As. *cakowā* does not arise. He has neither given any example of unaccented short vowels preceding the primary stress losing their timbre, nor of unaccented long vowels following the primary stress being shortened. These shortcomings have made his rules doubtful.

Kakati has hypothesised the shift of stress in words, the development of which cannot be explained through the penultimate stress-accent theory. According to him this stress-shift is due to the following causes —

- 1) stress-shift due to analogy of forms belonging to the same paradigm;
- 2) stress-shift in accordance with value;
- 3) stress-shift due to dialectical influence;
- 4) stress-shift due to long final vowels.

The compound verb (with a prefix) in the OIA stage had the stress on the root syllable, it was transferred in Assamese to the

prefix being the first syllable of the unchanging body (§ 142). This is due to analogy of forms belonging to the same paradigm. In support of his statement he has shown the stress on the prefix *ūt* of OIA *ūt-padyate* being shifted to *o* of As. *opaje* 'is born'. But according to his statement above, the stress should have been on *pād* of OIA *utpadyate*, not on the prefix *ut*—.

To him the stress-shift in accordance with value is the placing of the stress on a particular syllable of the word because that syllable is felt to be especially important for the comprehension of the whole (§ 143). But, in the examples, there is neither the indication of the stress in the OIA, nor in Assamese. The examples, therefore, are not clear.

If the final vowel is the long vowel *ā*, an anterior *-ā-* in the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable is shortened to *-a-* due to stress-shift from the original (§ 159). In the examples, he has neither shown the place where the original stress was, nor to which place it was shifted in Assamese. This makes his observations vague.

OIA VOWELS

The vowels of the OIA have manifold developments and the developments of final, initial and intervocalic vowels are as follows :-

Final—

1. OIA. *-a*, *-ā*, *-i*, *-ī*, *-u*, *-ū* > As. zero;
2. OIA. *-i*, *-ī* > MIA. *-ia*, *-īa* > As. *-i*, *-ī*;
3. OIA. *-u*, *-ū* > MIA. *-ua*, *-ūa*, > As. *-a*.

Initial—

4. OIA. *a—*, *ā—*, *e—*, *o—*, > As. *a—*;
5. OIA. *a—*, *ā—* > As. *ā—*;
6. OIA. *i—*, *ī—*, *e—*, > As. *i—*;
7. OIA. *a—*, *i—*, *u—*, *ū—* > As. *u—*;
8. OIA. *-e*, *aya—*, *ava—*, *ai—*, *i—* > As. *e—*;
9. OIA. *a—*, *o—*, *u—*, *ū—*, *au—*, *ap*, *av—* > As. *o—*;

Intervocalic—

10. OIA. *-a—* > As. zero;
11. OIA. *-a—*, *-ā—*, *-i—*, *-ī—*, *-u—*, *-ū—*, *-e—*, *-o—*, *-r—* > As. *-a—*;
12. OIA. *-a—*, *-ā—*, *-r—* > As. *-ā—*;

13. OIA. ---i--- , ---ĩ--- , ---u--- , ---ũ--- , ---e--- , ---ĩ--- > As. ---i--- ;
14. OIA. ---a--- , ---u--- , ---ũ--- , ---ĩ--- > As. ---u--- ;
15. OIA. ---e--- , ---ĩ--- > As. ---e--- ;
16. OIA. ---u--- , ---ũ--- , ---o--- , ---ĩ--- > As. ---o--- .

His analysis of the developments of the OIA final, initial and interior vowels are supported by evidences, except, of course, OIA ---e--- > As. ---e--- in §222, where he has not cited any example.

In the course of development of the OIA vowels into Assamese, sometimes stop consonants are eliminated in the MIA, as a result of which only the vowels remained. Their developments are not like the above and Kakati has found the following characteristics :—

1. MIA vowels in contact are diphthongised, as in OIA *dadhi* > MIA * *dai* > As. *dai*;
2. MIA vowels in contact are sometimes contracted, as in OIA *praguna* > MIA * *pauna* > As. *poṇ* 'straight';
3. Sometimes euphonic glides are inserted between the MIA vowels in contact, as in OIA *śrgāla* > MIA * *siāla* > As. *śiyāl* 'fox'.

His treatment of MIA vowels in contact are a new import in Assamese linguistics.

In course of the development of the OIA vowels to Assamese, mutation or the change of the quality of a vowel occurs in certain environments. In such cases the mutators are the following vowels or nasals.

1. OIA. $a/i/a$, $a/i/ā$, $a/u/a$ or $a/u/ā$ > As. $ɔ$, $ɔ/ā$; e.g. OIA *caitra* > As. *cot* 'the month Caitra'; OIA * *ladika* > As. *lorā*, 'boy'; OIA *raudra* > As. *rod* 'sunshine'; OIA *caturtha* > As. *cothā* 'the fourth day preceding or following today'.
2. MIA. $a/w/ā$, $i/w/a$ or $i/w/ā$ > As. $ow/ā$, $e/ɔ$ or $e/ɔ/ā$; e.g. OIA *cakravāka* > MIA * *cakkawāa* > As. *cakowā* 'ruddy goose'; OIA *trīya* > MIA * *tiwajja* > As. *teoj* (*teoj*) 'third (year)'; OIA *dīpālikā* > MIA * *dīwāliā* > As. *dewāli* (*deowāli*) 'illumination'.
3. OIA. a/N > As. $ē$; e.g. OIA *kanthā* > As. *kētha* 'blanket'.

The high or low quality of a vowel in a following syllable conduces to a similar modification in a preceding one." (§ 259). Kakati notices the following characteristics of Assamese vowel harmony :—

1. $a/i > u/i$; e.g. OIA *adī*—> As. *urī* 'wild rice';
2. $o/i/d > a/i/d$ e.g. *lōṃ + lya* > *luṃṃyā* 'salty';
3. $a/i > u/i$; e.g. OIA *parīkā* > As. *puṇī* 'floating moss';
4. $ṣ/i > u/i$; e.g. *mṣad + i* > *menī* 'a buffalo with drooping horns';
5. $ṣ/a > a/a$; e.g. *ṣṣṭ + ulā* > *peṣulā* 'pot-bellied';
6. $a/i (ī) > e/i (ī)$; e.g. OIA *nāgarī* > As. *nāgerī* 'the Nagari Script';
7. $a/u, d/u > e/u$; e.g. OIA *nakula* > As. *neul* 'mongoose';
8. unstressed $a > o$; e.g. OIA *karpāṣa* As. *kāṣor* 'cloth';
9. $a/a/d > o/o/d$; e.g. OIA *karkaṣa*—> As. *kokohā* 'rough'.

Vowel assimilation is also noticed in Assamese. The examples Kakati has cited are of progressive assimilation. He has not clearly stated whether the regressive and mutual assimilations are found in Assamese. According to him, the assimilation of the negative particle *na* with the root vowel is also a kind of vowel assimilation (§ 273).

Between the members of a conjunct group, anaptyctic *a, i, u, e* and *o* are inserted. *a* and *ā* are prothetically prefixed in Assamese. Epenthetic intruders are *-i-* and *-u-* (§§ 284, 285, 286).

As a result of the loss of nasals, vowels are nasalised. The nasals following a conjunct are lost and the preceding vowels are nasalised. In some cases we find nasalised vowels in Assamese where there were no nasals in the OIA. But most of the phenomena, which Kakati terms as spontaneous nasalisation, can be explained as they were nasalised in the MIA forms, eg. OIA *aśvattha* > MIA (Amg) *aṃsoṭṭha*, * *aṃsattha* > As. *ālat*, 'the holy fig tree'. According to Tagare, 'Grierson showed that most NIA words with nasalised vowels can be referred to MIA forms actual or hypothetical' (HGA, § 34). Under this circumstance, spontaneous nasalisation is a problem of MIA, not of NIA, and Kakati should have dropped it.

SOURCES OF ASSAMESE VOWELS

Kakati has enumerated the sources of vowels in Assamese as follows :—

1. As. *a* < OIA *a*, unstressed *ā*, *i*, *u*, *ṛ*, *ṣ*; MIA. *ā*; OIA *o*; MIA. *ō*; by anaptyxis between the members of a conjunct consonant group;
2. As. *o* < MIA *ai*, *au*;
3. As. *ā* < OIA *ā*, stressed *a*, *a* before a conjunct, *a* through medial stress, MIA *āā*, *āa*, *āā*;

4. As. *i* < OIA *i*, *r*, *a*; MIA *bi*; OIA *ya* after consonants by samprasāraṇa, conjunct consonants with *ya* through epenthesis, *e*, between members of a conjunct consonant by anaptyxis.

Kakati has not cited any MIA form with *bi* in support of his statement but has cited OIA *dvācatvāriṅśat* and the Assamese form *biālliś* 'forty two', (§ 300). From OIA *dvācatvāriṅśat*, no MIA form with *bi* is possible. Kale gives OIA *dvīcatvāriṅśat* as an alternative (HSG, P. 104). From OIA *dvīcatvāriṅśat* MIA **bicattāriśa* > **bicā-tālīśa* > **biāālīśa* is possible. From MIA **biāālīśa* > As. *biyālliś* is possible. If this be so, As. *i* comes not from MIA *bi*, but from OIA. *dvi*.

5. As. *u*, *ū* < OIA *u*, *r*, *a* after initial labial consonants, *a* after interior labial consonants, *a* by vowel harmony, *o* by vowel harmony, interior *ā*, *va* after consonants by samprasāraṇa, between members of a conjunct group by anaptyxis, *i* in prefixes *dvi* and *nī*.

6. As. *e* < OIA *e*, before double consonants, *ai*, *aya*, *ava*, MIA *iya*, *iyā* after consonants in the initial syllable, OIA *a* by vowel mutation, MIA *a+i* by contraction, OIA *a* through the influence of the following nasals, between members of a conjunct by anaptyxis.

7. As. *o* < OIA *o*, *u* before double consonants, MIA *a+u* by contraction, *a*, present participle in *-ant-*, MIA *ua*, *uā*, *uwa* in the initial syllable, OIA *awa*, *aya*, MIA *a+ā*, between members of a conjunct consonant by anaptyxis.

Kakati has, moreover, shown 21 diphthongs in Assamese; viz., *ie*, *ia*, *io*, *iu*, *ei*, *ea*, *eo*, *eu*, *ǝǝ*, *ai*, *aě*, *ao*, *au*, *ǝě*, *ǝǝ*, *oi*, *oe*, *oa*, *ou*, *ui* and *ua* (§ 305). But he has not shown their sources.

The treatment of OIA vowels has been successfully done by Kakati, except some minor discrepancies.

OIA CONSONANTS

1) Kakati observes that single initial consonants have generally remained unchanged. There have been, however, some cases of aspiration and deaspiration of stops, of change of a sibilant to a palatal *ç(h)*, and of *bh-* to *h-*; OIA *y-* and *v-* have changed to *j-* and *b-* and *r-* is found as *l-*, (*l* > *n*) and also *r-*. (§ 316).

This is the general comment made by Kakati about the changes of OIA initial non-aspirates, aspirates, sibilants, semi-vowels and liquids. He has not referred here to the voicing (§ 453) of unvoiced stops, the unvoicing (§ 391) of the voiced stops, the unvoicing

[440f] of the aspirates and turning into π (§ 497) of the sibilants. So, this observation is not complete.

2) The stops $-k-$, $-g-$; $-t-$, $-c-$; $-p-$, $-b-$; $-y-$, $-v-$ have been dropped; $-t-$, $-d-$ have been reduced to $-r-$; and in a number of Māgadhi inheritances $-rt-$ has resulted in $-t-$ as well; intervocal $-c-$ and $-j-$ remain as $-c-$, $-j-$ or are dropped (§ 317).

Here he has dwelt on the changes of OIA single intervocalic stops, and therefore the comment on the change of OIA $-rt-$, a conjunct, is unwanted. Instances of retention of $-k-$, $-g-$, $-t-$, and $-p-$ are referred to in §§ 392, 419, 440, 403, 440, 450, where they have not been dropped. In §§ 401, 407, 446 and 452 $-k-$, $-g-$, $-d-$ and $-p-$ have not been dropped, but aspirated. $-k-$, $-t-$ and $-p-$ have been voiced in §§ 404, 444 and 450. $-d-$ has been changed to $-r-$ in § 480, and to $-l-$ in § 490. $-t-$ and $-d-$ have not only been reduced to $-l-$, but $-t-$ has been voiced in § 480, and $-t-$ and $-d-$ have been reduced to $-l-$ in § 490. There is a case of unvoicing of $-j-$ in § 419. All these points have been left out by Kakati.

3) The aspirates $-kh-$, $-gh-$; $-th-$, $-dh-$; $-ph-$, $-bh-$ have been reduced to $-h-$; $-th-$ and $-dh-$ occur as $-rh-$ (§ 318).

In §§ 402, 404, 440, 444, 450, and 454 $-kh-$, $-gh-$; $-th-$, $-dh-$; $-ph-$, $-bh-$ have become aspirated; $-kh-$ has been voiced in §§ 402 and 407. $-gh-$ has been unvoiced in § 407; $-dh-$ has been reduced to $-rh-$ in § 482. Kakati has not noticed these facts.

4) $-m-$ has become a mere nasalisation of contiguous vowels through an intermediate stage of $\sim w$; (§ 319).

In § 455, he has shown OIA $-m-$ > As. $-b-$. He has also observed that OIA single intervocal $-m-$ (> MIA $\sim w$) is reduced to mere nasalisation with or without a glide element in Assamese (§ 462). To understand this point, we should know about the change of OIA $-m-$ in the MIA (Ap.). The OIA $-m-$ is generally retained in the MIA (Pali) and MIA (Pkt). "In A(Pabhramśa) *ma* in the initial, may become *va*; *kaśāla* beside *kamala*; *bhaśāra* beside *bhamara* (OIA *bhramara*); . . . *paśāṇa* = *pramāṇa*, beside *paṁāṇa*;" (CGPL § 251) That is, OIA $-m-$ > MIA (Ap) $-v-$ or $-w-$. By the term "with a glide element" Kakati means the change of OIA $-m-$ to As. $-v-$ or $-w-$. If this is his stand, then § 462 contrasts § 319. He should have cleared this point here.

5) OIA $-n-$, $-n-$changed to $-n-$ in Mod. Assamese (§ 319).

6) OIA $-ś-$, $-ṣ-$, $-s-$ > As. $-h-$;

We find As. *aśakat* 'not fat' from OIA *aśakṭa* and As. *kaṣati* 'test-stone' from OIA *kaṣṭi* where $-ś-$ and $-ṣ-$ have been changed to $-x-$, not to $-h-$. In § 401, we find $-ṣ-$ > $-kh-$ in Assamese. $-ś-$ has been reduced to $-c-$ in §§ 420, 423; $-ṣ-$ to $-ch-$ in § 423; $-s-$ to $-ch-$ in § 423. These changes have not been noticed here.

7) There is little interchange between $-r-$ and $-l-$ (§ 321).

There are instances of OIA $-l-$ becoming $-n-$ in § 469. He has overlooked this.

CONSONANTAL GROUPS.

Kakati's observations on the OIA consonantal groups are not clear and conclusive. Some of the observations are correct, but some are only partially true. Another point is that he has, at some places, not mentioned whether the changes are found in initial clusters or medial ones.

According to § 323, $-tth-$ should have changed to $-lh-$, but in § 440, it is $-t-$. § 324 theorises OIA $-tn-$ > As. $-t-$, but no example has been shown there. In § 284, $-tn-$ has been changed into $-tan$, not $-t-$. According to this section OIA $-tm-$ > As. $-p-$, but in § 440, it is $-t-$, not $-p-$.

According to § 325, OIA $-dy-$ > As. $-d-$ but we find in § 480, $-dy-$ > $-r-$, not $-d-$. § 326 observes that dentals + y > As. $-o-$, $-ch-$, $-j-$ etc. But we find in § 440 OIA $-ty-$ > As. $-t-$, not $-c-$.

§ 327 formulates that stop or aspirate + r > As. stop or aspirate. But we find in §§ 433, 479 t from $tr-$, and d from $dr-$, where they should have been $t-$ and $d-$ respectively. We also find $th-$ from $tr-$ in § 435, $ph-$ from $pr-$ in § 451, where they were expected to be $t-$ and $p-$. Medially, we find $-r-$ from $-dr-$ in § 480, $-t-$ from $-tr-$ in § 434, and $-l-$ from $-dr-$ in § 490, where they should have been $-d-$, $-t-$ and $-d-$ respectively.

Stop or aspirate + v ; assimilation of $-v-$ (§ 329). But in § 418 OIA $tv-$ has given us $c-$. In § 433 OIA $tv-$ has turned into $t-$, not $t-$.

According to § 330 $kṣ$ gives $-kh-$ or $-ch-$, but in § 420 it has given us $j-$, in § 392, $-k-$, in § 419 $-c-$ and in § 504 $-h-$.

His observation on the development of anusvāra followed by $y, r, l, \dot{l}, \dot{r}, \dot{l}$, and h is not clear (§ 334). Here Kakati refers to § 291 if for the explanation of the development. But the explanation is not found there. According to § 292 (a), OIA anusvāra $+\dot{l}, \dot{r}, \dot{l} > \text{As.}$ nasalisation of the preceding vowel and the change of the sibilants to $-h$. He has not spoken of the lengthening of the preceding short vowel, though he has done it in the examples. § 292(b) directs "anusvāra with h, y, v are treated in the following sub-sections." From sub-section (c) to (m) no such treatment is found. sub-section (n) declares that "of anusvāra with h, y there seems to be no case in Assamese." Development of anusvāra with y, r, l, v, h were never treated by him. So we are kept in darkness about their developments.

" r +dental stop or aspirate $> \text{As. } -l(h), -r(h)-$ etc, or $-l(h)-, -d(h)-$ " etc. (§ 337). In § 480 we find $-r-$ from OIA $-rd-$, in § 490 $-l-$ from $-rd-$, in § 444 $-d-$ from $-rdh-$. These developments are not in accordance with the spirit of the said section.

" r + sibilant . . . is . . . reduced to $-h-$ in Assamese" (§ 342). But in § 419, OIA $-r\dot{s}-$ is reduced to $-c-$, not $-h-$.

§ 344 states that l +stop leads to a single stop in Assamese where l is assimilated to the stop. But in § 401, we find $-kh-$ from $-lk-$, where $-k-$ was expected.

"Sibilant+stop or aspirate : Assamese has a single aspirate." (§ 350). This rule as stated by Kakati has many exceptions in his work. Initially $sk-$ in § 391, $st-$ in § 433, $st-$ in § 439, $st-$ in § 435 and $sth-$ in § 435, should have given us $kh-$, and $th-$; but we find $k-$, $t-$, $t-$, $th-$ and $th-$ instead. Medially also $-sk-$ in § 392, $-st-$ in § 434, $-sth-$ in § 480, $-sth-$ in § 582, $-sk-$ in § 392, $-st-$ in § 434, $-st-$ in § 440, $-st-$ in § 482, and $-sth-$ in § 437 should have been reduced to $-kh-$, $-th-$, $-th-$, $-th-$, $-kh-$, $-th-$, $-th-$, $-th-$ and $-th-$. But instead of these we find $-k-$, $-t-$, $-r-$, $-rh-$, $-k-$, $-t-$, $-t-$, $-r-$ and $-jh-$.

According to Kakati sibilant $+y$ is reduced to a single sibilant and it is modified to $-h-$ (§ 352). But in § 497, $ly-$ in the initial position has been modified to $x-$, not to $-h-$. He also states that sibilant $+r, l, v. . > \text{early Assamese single sibilant written } -s- > \text{modern Assamese } -h-$ (§ 353). But $ly-$ in § 479, $ly-$ in § 497, $ly-$ in § 497, $ly-$ and $sv-$ in the same section have been reduced to $x-$, not to $-h-$. In 424 $ly-$ has been reduced to $-ch-$, not $-h-$.

From the above discussion, it can be observed that his treatment of OIA consonants is not complete and conclusive. Some of his observations are supported by evidences and some of them are only partially supported.

SOURCES OF ASSAMESE CONSONANTS

Kakati has given us the sources of Assamese consonants in §§ 390-504. Most of the sources as given by him are acceptable, though at places he has omitted some of the sources. In the case of the nasal sound *ŋ* Kakati has shown *-m-* in § 457, *-ŋg-* in § 459 and *-m-* in § 461 as the sources of As. *ŋ*. But he has forgotten to mention that in § 460 he has shown *-g-*; in §§ 294, 567 *-gn-*; in § 433 *-gm-*; in §§ 129, 137, 212, 227, 271, 292, 357, 519, 725 *-ŋgh-*; in § 479 *-n-*; in §§ 294, 571 *-rg-*; in §§ 294, 358 *-rgh-*; and in § 451 *-lg-* as the sources of *ŋ*. Moreover, he has not shown the sources of *ʒh* in Assamese as he has not accepted it as a phoneme. But *ʒh* is a phoneme in Assamese as it has been shown in the above discussion.

His treatment of the development of *-y-* and *-w-* in Assamese is not complete. They develop from vowels in contact like *-eā-* (*seyā*) 'that'; *-we-* (*jaduwe*) 'Jadu' etc.

As to the development of *r* also, Kakati's analysis is not comprehensive as he has not shown the development of *r* from OIA *-t-* (§ 161), *-d-* (§ 227), *-d-* (§ 213) etc.

He has also not shown the development of medial and final *x* in Assamese. In words like *oṣud* 'medicine' (§ 147), *kāṣar* (§ 573) 'of the side', *nisani* 'rice-gruel' (§ 538) etc medial *-x-* is present and in *hābilāṣ* 'longing' (§§ 227, 503), *kāṣ* 'side' (§§ 107, 397, 496), *caupāś* 'four sides' (§ 251) etc. final *x* is noticed.

Kakati's treatment of the development of Assamese phonology is, on the whole, commendable. But shortcomings are also there and these have been noticed in the foregoing pages. In spite of the shortcomings, however, Kakati's study remains the most dependable guide to a historical understanding of Assamese phonology.

Note : Throughout the discussion AFD, 1941 has been used and referred to.

References and Abbreviations

1. Kakati, Dr. Banikanta : 1941 : *Assamese, Its Formation and Development* (AFD);
2. Ibid : 1962 : AFD, edited by Dr. G.C. Goswami;
3. Kale, M.R. : 1961 : *A Higher Sanskrit Grammar* (HSG);
4. Katre, Dr. S.M. : 1961 : *Introduction to Modern Indian Linguistics* (IMIL);
5. Pischel, R : 1965 : *Comparative Grammar of the Prakrit Languages*, translated by S. Jha (CGPL);
6. Sen, Dr Sukumar : 1960 : *A Comparative Grammar of Middle Indo-Aryan* (C GMIA);
7. Seth, H.T. : 1963 : *Pāṇi-Sadda-Mahannavo* (PSM);
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Dr. Kakati's Contribution to the Study of Assamese Morphology

Upendranath Goswami

Morphology is a second level of language analysis. It is the study of combinations of sounds that carry single units of meaning. A combination of sounds that carries a single indivisible meaning is called a morph. Morpheme is a collective term. It indicates a family of linguistic forms that are semantically similar and in complementary distribution. An allomorph is one of the member forms of a given morpheme. Morphs are divided into free morphs and bound morphs. Bound morphs are again classified into affixes which include a prefix, a suffix or an infix. The workings of affixes are again divided into two broad categories : inflection and derivation. With the help of these procedures morphs are arranged into some classes generally known as form-classes which include nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs and some function words generally known as prepositions, conjunctions etc. A broad idea of basic sentence patterns sometimes helps in determining a particular form-class. The morphology of a language is studied at the present time along these or similar lines.

This sort of technique had not yet evolved during the period in which Kakati prepared his book, *Assamese, its Formation and Development*. So in assessing the same we shall have to take note of the situation. Kakati, however, tried his best to make full use of linguistic learning prevalent during his time. He himself was conscious of his limitations and so he wrote in the preface to the book, "In the absence of any previous historical study of the language by any scholar, and in the absence also of any personal help in the matter of collection and sifting of materials, the following pages embody the results of unaided efforts on my part. The list of books separately appended shews the extent of my indebtedness for theoretical materials to the great masters of N.I.A. linguistics. But amongst them frequent references have been made to the works of Bloch, Chatterji, Grierson and Turner as the immediate sources of information. So far as the method of treatment is concerned I have tried to follow the foot-marks of these eminent teachers. The title *Assamese, its Formation and Development* has been suggested by Dr. Chatterji.

Though the present book is not a full-fledged formation and development, the suggested title seems appropriate in view as it is reminiscent of the two great works *La Formation de la Langue Marathe* and *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* from which light and direction have been constantly sought."

Morphology forms the second part of Kakati's book. It consists of eight chapters. The first chapter is on formative affixes. In this chapter the writer has discussed some of the primary and secondary suffixes in Assamese and has tried to trace the origin of those suffixes. He has not attempted to show the prefixes and infixes in Assamese. Prefixes are not uncommon in Assamese but infixes are few in number. Still we come across such forms: *kītāp-kei-khan* 'the book', *māyuh-kei-jan* 'the men'. Kakati has shown the suffixes with examples. But from the descriptive point of view in some cases those suffixes cannot be treated as such. The examples for the suffix *-ā* are *kanā* 'blind', *ronā** 'red'. We have a free morph *rai*. After that the suffix *-ā* is added. Here there is no difficulty. But we have no such free morph as *kan* after which the suffix *-ā* may be added. From the historical point of view, of course, this suffix is necessary and Kakati is quite right in separating it from the root. The historical development of the word *kanā* is like this: Skt. *kāṇa* > *kāṇ-ā* > *kāṇā* (Kāncūpi Dialect) > *kanā* (St. As.). Similarly Kakati has established a suffix *-i* in *cul* 'hair'. In Assamese there is no word like *cul* after which a suffix *-i* is added. But historically this *-i* is required as skt. *cūḍā* > *cūḍ* > *cūr* > *cūl* (Hindi) > *cul-i* (As.). In the words *jonāk* 'moon-shine' and *dīthak* 'waking state' suffix *-k* cannot be established as there are no words like *jonā* or *dītha* although historically this suffix is to be added after the Skt. forms *jyotsnā-* and *dīṣṭa-*. Thus the whole chapter is to be studied from the historical point of view and this chapter is of immense value as it has shown how O.I.A. forms through M.I.A. have developed into Assamese thh. forms both free and bound. One general principle operating in Assamese morphology is morphophonemics or oblique forms. Sometimes this is predictable and sometimes not. This phenomenon is to be borne in mind in arranging the bases and the suffixes. Thus in showing *ujāi* 'up-stream' as the combination of *ūj* √-ani, *jirani* 'resting' as √ *jirā*-ani *jir-*. In *ādharmedā* 'half done' the suffix is shown as *-armedā*. We have no word like *ādā* but *ādāḍā*. This *ādāḍā* undergoes a change and becomes *ādā*. These are some of the modifications that may be considered on the treatment of formative affixes by Kakati.

* *n* = (PIA) *ṇ*

The second chapter is on definitives in Assamese. The definitives may broadly be divided into general definitives and personal definitives. The general definitives have been called enclitic definitives or numeratives and are defined as post-positional affixes or words which are added to nouns and numerals to define the nature of the object or article referred to. They are commonly described as articles and have the value of the definite article 'the'. Out of the thirteen such definitives mentioned, eleven are from St. As, one from Early As. and one from the dialect. From the morphological point of view these definitive suffixes in Assamese are very important as they reveal one of the distinctive characteristics of Assamese and they are numerous. These definitive suffixes are morphologically conditioned although it has been stated that they 'define the nature of the object or article referred to'. For example, *hātī-to* 'the elephant', *mākhi-to* 'the fly', *pensil-dāl* 'the pencil', *kalam-to* 'the pen'. As to the origin of this phenomenon, Kakati suggests the influence of Austric languages. But this is found in Tibeto-Burman languages also. The following examples from the Deuri-Chutiya language may be compared here: *pemsu-hācā* 'one betal leaf', *yogi-kujā* 'one knife', *gui-ticā* 'one betal nut' etc. The personal definitive is another 'strange morphological phenomenon in Assamese'. It has been discussed in three subclasses. First, "different words are used with reference to the same relation according as he or she is senior or junior in age to the person with whom relationship is indicated." Thus my elder brother' is *kakāi*, 'my younger brother' is *bhāi*. Secondly, "words of relationship take on different personal affixes according as the relationship indicated is with the first, the second or the third person. In the case of the second person, the rank of the person also is taken into consideration." Thus, *bopāi* 'my father', *bāper* 'your (inferior) father', *bāperā* 'your (honorific) father', *bāpek* 'his father'. Thirdly, the vocative particle *he* takes different suffixes 'according to the nature of the rank of the person with reference to whom it is used; eg. *he-ra*, *he-rau* 'used in calling to inferiors', *he-rā* 'used in calling to equals (hon.)', *he-ri* 'used in addressing superiors', *he-rai*, *he-rei* 'terms of address with endearment'. In the formation of the personal definitives in Assamese Kakati holds the view that the influence of Austric languages is at work. But in Tibeto-Burman languages also a similar process is noticed. Here, one of the peculiarities of the Deuri-Chutiya language may be observed. In this language different words are used when a person is addressed or referred to. Thus *āji* 'son-in-law when addressed to' but *piji* 'son-in-law when referred to'.

Discussions on the gender, the number and the case form the third chapter. Kakati has rightly remarked that grammatical gender has disappeared from Assamese. In this language sex is generally distinguished by the use of some qualifying terms, or by the employment of different words, or by the addition of suffixes. The feminine suffixes mentioned by Kakati are *-ī*, *-ānī* and *-nī*. He has traced the origin of these suffixes also. Actually the feminine suffixes in Assamese are *-ī*, *-ānī*, *-nī* and *-nī*. The example for *-ānī* given by Kakati is *baruānī* 'wife of a Barua'. Here *-nī* is the suffix and not *-ānī*. Kakati again writes, "The feminine in *-ā* does not exist in Assamese; but dialectically the feminine in *-ā* is found in Western Assamese *māikā* 'a female, a mother' (St. Coll. *māiki*). In St. Coll. the only examples of fem. *-ā* are *tīrolā* 'a woman', *ānā* 'grand-mother.' In all these examples *-ā* cannot be treated as a suffix as the remaining portions do not function as free morphs. So these words may be treated as single feminine forms of the language.

In discussing number Kakati has taken into consideration the plural suffixes used in Early Assamese, in the Kāmṛūpi dialect as well as in the St. Assamese. Here also he has tried to show how these suffixes have developed. His derivations are mostly sound. Yet some differences of opinion may arise in some cases. As for example, Kakati has shown that the plural suffix *-bilāk* may be taken as a blend between *viśāla* + *bahula* or might be related to Khāsī *byltāi* 'in great numbers'. Kaliram Medhi thinks that it has come from Garo *phlāk* which is connected with Mismi *kā-phlāk*. This explanation seems to be more accurate. Again the dialectical plural suffix—*the* is shown to be related to O.I.A. *stavaka*. But this seems to be connected with *√sthā* from which Bhojpuri *thē* 'here' has been derived. So also Kāmṛūpi plural suffixes *-gilā*, *-gilāk* are according to Kakati of non-Aryan origin. But they seem to be connected with Skt. *kula* from which Bengali *-gulā*, *-gulān* are derived.

In the discussion on case Kakati rightly observes that there is no agent case in Assamese and the case-relationship is indicated by two devices: (i) by independent post-positions, (ii) by agglutinative case-endings. But the statement that 'the noun often takes the post-position *-e* in the nominative when it is the subject of a transitive verb' is not wholly true as with some intransitive verbs also the nominative case affix is added; eg. *rāme kānde* 'Ram weeps', *rāmē lāhe* 'Ram laughs'. Another statement 'nor is there any oblique base except in the case of pronouns' requires a modification. A noun

form ending with a consonant will have an oblique form ending in *-a* before the accusative, the dative, the genitive and the locative case-endings are added; before the instrumental case-affix the noun form will end with *-e*; eg. *mānuh* 'man', *mānuh-e*, *mānuha-k*, *mānuha-lai*, *mānuha-r*, *mānuha-t*, *mānuhe-re*. Kakati again writes : "After nouns ending in *-a*, *-u* and *-ā* this *-e* becomes *-i*". In St. As. the nominative case-affix *-e* becomes *-i* only after nouns ending in *-a* and *-ā*.

The fourth chapter deals with the pronouns. Here the writer has given a good account of himself in classifying the pronouns in Assamese into six divisions, Personal, Demonstrative, Relative, Interrogative, Indefinite and Reflexive. He has also shown very remarkably the origin of the pronouns and their development from O.I.A. passing through M.I.A. A good number of Pronominal Derivatives have also been discussed in this chapter. The writer has tried at the beginning of the chapter to show the distinctiveness of Assamese pronouns from those of the nouns by saying 'except in the nominative, the pronoun in Assamese takes the same affixes and post-positions as the noun, but unlike the noun it has a definite oblique or common form to which the affixes or Post-positions are added.' When Kakati says 'except in the nominative' it seems that he did not take into account the pronominal forms with consonant endings, which take the same nominative affix as the nouns do; eg. *sihāt-e khāy* 'they eat'.

The next chapter is on Assamese verb roots. Here also, the writer has done the work very creditably by broadly classifying the verb roots into two groups, Primary and Secondary. Primary roots include primary roots inherited from O.I.A., simple and prefixed roots and primary roots from causatives in O.I.A. Secondary roots include causatives, denominatives, suffixed roots, onomatopoeic roots and roots of non-Aryan origin. A large number of compound roots are found in Assamese which escaped the notice of Kakati.

The development of the passive construction in Assamese has been shown from the Early Assamese stage to the modern times with appropriate examples in the sixth chapter on morphology. In this chapter the conjugational affixes with their origin and development are also discussed. But a clear picture of the different tenses with verbal suffixes changing according to the roots ending in vowels and consonants is lacking. With the addition of verbal suffixes sometimes an oblique form of the root is formed; eg. *mai ka-ō* 'I say', *tumi (ka>) ko-wā* 'you say'. The following examples will show how verbal

suffixes differ in accordance with the endings of the roots; eg. *mai* *ka-m* 'I will say'; *mai* *lha-m* 'I will eat'; *mai* *di-m* 'I will give'; *mai* *(ra>) ru-m* 'I will plant'; *mai* *dhar-i-m* 'I will hold'.

The seventh chapter deals with the conditional part, the participles, the conjunctives and the infinitives. In all these a good historical account is presented with suitable illustrations from early Assamese texts. The last chapter is on pleonastic suffixes. From the examples given, it appears that the forms termed as pleonastic suffixes may very well be regarded as verbal post-positions. The examples are like these : *diye gai* 'he does give'; *jāō-con* 'let me just go'.

Thus, within the compass of eight chapters Kakati has discussed the morphology of the Assamese language. For a full description of Assamese morphology discussions on adjectives, adverbs, numerals, indeclinables, emphatic forms, reduplications, formations of onomatopoeic and echo words as well as the formation of compounds will be necessary. Dr Kakati's attention was not drawn to these topics as he had to follow the models of his predecessors in N.I.A. linguistics. Yet, it must be admitted that, in the copies he selected for discussion, he did full justice and these have helped in establishing the individuality of Assamese. With the discovery of new materials and new techniques of investigation some modifications will be needed, some of which have already been mentioned in course of the discussion above. But *Assamese, its Formation and Development* will remain a distinct milestone in the historical study of the morphology of the Assamese language for many more years to come.

A Descriptive Approach to Dr. Kakati's treatment of the Assamese Tense System

Sukumar Biswas

1. This paper calls for a short introduction, otherwise there is a chance of its being misunderstood. Kakati's treatment of Assamese language is historical. In his analyses and exposition he is so exact and precise that one can, only at the expense of one's own misconceived notions, question his authority. This paper has been intended only to clarify certain points in greater detail from the descriptive point of view. In doing so there might be some difference in the presentation of facts and handling the material, but there is no question of raising any point of disagreement.

Neither Dr. Chatterji nor Dr. Kakati treated the historical aspect of language indicating its phonemic variations. That was, in fact, none of their business. They presented the historical growth of the languages concerned with particular emphasis, quite obviously, on the standard literary language. This paper has been designed to adduce a few relevant phonemic features* so that the treatment on this tense system becomes all the more explanatory and clear. When Zandvoort wrote a book on English Grammar he did not challenge the authority of Nesfield. This paper should be read with this conviction that any linguistic theory, to be valid, must allow for the possibility of different analyses by different interpreters (Robert Allen *The Verb-system of the Present-day American English*, 1966, p. 97).

2. The treatment of tense and person-endings has been put together in Kakati's book under the heading "The Personal Affixes of Verbs." This does not seem to be methodical and is, to a certain extent, misleading too. In fact, tense-morphemes are distinct from the functional bound morphemes generally termed as personal endings. The personal endings under the radical tense (present indicative) has been presented in such a way that it may give one the impression that the tense and the person morphemes are identical. As *kar-ō*

* In this paper, examples are shown in Roman characters.

(present tense) and *kar-il-ō* (past tense) contain the same personal ending; *ō* can never be accepted as the personal ending (for first person) and the tense sign at the same time. Therefore *ō* in our example here does not constitute a portmanteau morph.* Technically speaking, the tense morpheme of the present tense Conjugation is Zero (ϕ), to which the endings are attached.

$\sqrt{\text{kar}} - \text{kar-}\phi - \text{kar-}\tilde{o} / \text{kar-}\tilde{a} / \text{kar-e}.$

The evolution of the past tense base or the preterite stem is altogether a different subject of study which has been discussed in detail by Dr. S. K. Chatterji. Kakati has given a brief review of the historical development of the past as well as the future tense base in the same chapter under the aforesaid heading. So far as the standard Assamese language is concerned, there is, in fact, no major point of difference in the employment of personal affixes for the present and the past tense, e.g.

$\text{kar-}\tilde{o} \sim \text{kar-il-}\tilde{o} / \text{kar-}\tilde{a} \sim \text{kar-il-}\tilde{a} / \text{etc.}$

Therefore, the past tense of a verb can be distinguished from the present tense of the same verb (person-morphemes remaining the same in respective cases) by recognising and identifying the past tense base or the tense sign.

present	—	<i>kar-ϕ-\tilde{o}</i>	=	I do
past	—	<i>kar-il-\tilde{o}</i>	=	I did

In contradistinction to this, the corresponding forms in Bengali show morphemic variation in the use of the tense base as well as the personal ending, e.g.

present	—	<i>kar-ϕ-i</i>	=	I do
past	—	<i>kar-il-$\tilde{a}m$</i>	(literary)	} = I did.
		<i>kor-l-um</i>	(colloquial)	

Therefore, the past tense base demands a separate treatment, whereas the personal endings of both the tense forms can best be studied together with a few points of contrast indicated therein.

In standard Assamese, a remarkable difference lies in the use of the personal affix in the third person past tense where there are

* Portmanteau morph—vide Hockett (Problems in morphemic Analyses, R.I.L. 229-242; also, Matthews, P.H.—Inflectional Morphology, 1972 p. 65.

two variants which can be technically described as morphologically conditioned allomorphs or alternants.

teō go-l~teō kar-il-e

where allomorph variation swings between $\phi \sim e$ according to the nature of syntax. Similar variation is found in Bengali, but it is not an absolute principle as it is in Assamese. $/o \sim e/$ - variation in *gæl-o~dil-e* in intransitive and transitive verbs respectively is not uniformly followed. There is free variation of morpheme : *bol-l-o—bol-l-e* (=told).

2.1. The personal endings attached to the future base are distinct, as such these should be discussed separately. An account of the personal terminations indicated by their fusion with the tense-bases does not depict the phonemic and morphemic character of the endings properly and precisely. A comparative chart may be prepared to indicate the personal endings of the tenses and this eventually exhibits the morphemic character also. It is needless to say that number is an irrelevant category in the conjugation of Assamese/Bengali verbs :—

Tense-base

	ϕ -	-l	-b
First —	\tilde{o}	\tilde{o}	ϕ
Second —	\tilde{a}	\tilde{a}	\tilde{a}
Third —	e/y	ϕ/e	a

2.2. One noticeable omission in Dr. Kakati's A.F.D* should be pointed out here. Third person present indicative exhibits two phonemically conditioned alternant morphemes as personal endings, e.g.

xi ja-y~xi kar-e
teō khā-y~teō paḍh-e

$/-e/$ is added to roots ending in consonants and $/-y/$ is employed when the roots end in vowels.

3. The past and the future tense bases are indicated in the standard grammars as *ila* and *iba* respectively. This is not correct. The phoneme $/i/$ which is normally shown as a part of the base-morpheme is indeed a distinct phonemic element which has nothing

* Dr. Chatterji did not overlook this variation : art. 674.

to do with the tense sign. This is borne out by the fact that *go-l/* *khā-l-e* etc do not contain the vowel phoneme. [i] is, in fact, the vowel introduced to serve as a link or union vowel, imported and placed between the root and the tense base when two consonants are likely to clash. That is a regular phenomenon in Sanskrit, e.g. *dā-ga-ti*, but *gam-ō-ga-ti*. Therefore, the use or non-use of the phoneme depends on the phonemic environment.

go-l ~ kar-i-l-e
khā-l-e ~ kh-ī-l-(e)
jā-m ~ kar-ō-m

Secondly, the vowel phoneme [a] after the base is equally misleading. If this phoneme be a part of the base then its disappearance would seem to be anomalous where the personal ending is ϕ , e.g.

kar-i-a/gt-l ~ go-l.

The loss of [a] in *la* or *ba ~ ma* due to forestress is no explanation either. That the tense morpheme is *l* and not *la* can be further verified by comparing the third person present with the third person past.—

kar-φ-e ~ kar-i-l-e

Recognition of the base as *la* would require a suitable explanation showing the development of the form as *kar-i-la-s > kar-i-l-e* or *kar-i-la-s > kar-i-ba*. (Also, compare—*kar-φ-ō* present, 1st person, Caryā, early middle Bengali and Assamese : *kar-i-b-o* (ō), Caryā/ middle Bengali : *kar-i-m-φ*— Assamese, where *m* comes by phonemic alternation of *b* as has been pointed out by Dr. Kakati and Dr. Chatterji)*

Therefore, *l* and *b* (*m*) should be considered as the tense morphemes.

4. The concept of the compound tense is apparently a misleading phenomenon. In the true sense of the term a tense is to be recognised by the tense-morpheme used in a given context. The so-called compound tense exhibits structural difference in the construction-pattern of the form, but the tense morpheme is in no way dis-

* In the eastern Bihari dialects (Magadhan) the base *l* or *d* is quite clearly discernible, as in *kar-a-b/ kar-a-t* where *a* serves as union vowel. *b ~ m* variation is found in East Bengali dialect, *kar-m-a*, where the tense morpheme and the personal affix may appear metathetically also, e.g. *kar-a-m*.

inct from the present indicative and the past tense in respective case. If the tense morpheme and the personal affixes are taken off, what remains is a compound stem consisting of two verbal forms. These are semantic components only enforcing a secondary meaning conjointly to which the time of action is tagged by suffixing the tense-sign.—

dekh-i-ch-ḥ-ō/dekh-i-ch-i-l-ō

When such forms are stripped of their tense and person morphemes, we find a stem which is constituted by the combination of two nuclei (to speak in the words of Eugene Nida), and hence it is a compound stem. The principal component differs from the peripheral constituent mainly in respect of four items :

(1) The first member of the compound is the principal constituent which denotes the sense of the compound as a whole.

(2) The peripheral constituent, which is a morphological auxiliary, functions as a catalytic agent, so to say.

(3) The peripheral constituent is constituted by the same verb always i.e. $\sqrt{āch}$, whereas the principal constituent is a variable element substituted by relevant verbs according to the desired sense—*dekh-i-ch-ō/Kar-i-ch-ō*.

(4) The peripheral constituent appears in its 'atonic' status. Kakati has used the term "clipped form" which indeed means a non-accented allomorph of the nuclear morpheme $\sqrt{āch}$. Nida (*Morphology*) and Bernard Bloch (*The English Verb system*) prefer the term 'atonic'. In Assamese, the atonic status of the verb is *ch* always, whereas in Bengali there is further phonemic variation of the same allomorph i.e. *ch* and *cch*. eg

khe-ye-ch-i | *khā-cch-i*.
kor-ch-i-lo *kocch-i-lo* (assimilation).
dhu-cch-i-lo.

It is, however, always *ch* in literary expressions.

4.1. It has been made clear that the treatment of the present tense (indicative) demands special emphasis on the study of the personal terminations, and in the treatment of past and future tense, attention should be drawn to the tense-morphemes which are distinct while the periphrastic tenses exhibit the secondary character of the stem. Neither in the employment of the tense-sign nor in the

recruitment of the personal termination do they differ from the present and the past tenses.

Compare :

(a) Present indicative : periphrastic present—

kar-ḥ-ō : *kar-i-ch-ḥ-ō*

khā-ḥ-y : *khā-i-ch-ḥ-e **

(Comp. base+union vowel)+tense morpheme+person morpheme)

(b) past tense : periphrastic past—

kar-i-l-ō : *kar-i-ch-i-l-ō ***

khā-l-e : *khā-i-ch-i-l-e*

It is evident that these compound bases or morphemes do not exhibit inflectional anomaly ; they behave in the same way as the simple past and present do from the viewpoint of conjugation pattern. Since they are semantically distinct they may be called verbs under secondary conjugation. Sanskrit secondary conjugation does not exhibit secondary nature of the conjugation ; they take the primary endings, the only difference being that the stem formation is quite distinct, and the stem forming elements added to or incorporated with the principal root impose a secondary meaning.

In Assamese the context determines whether a form denotes a progressive or a perfect action. Kakati has very aptly pointed out that the new formation of the type of *dekh-i āche* has not the true character of the so-called compound tense. Assamese differs from Bengali in structure and content as well. *kari āche* means "has been doing"; secondly, the components are not fused together and as such it does not constitute a compound. Dr. Chatterji observed that the *iyā*-form * of the early Assamese occurs with the substantive verb, but only as a separate word; and they do not express the perfect idea. (vide, *O.D.B.L. II. art. 757*). The Assamese expression may well be

* Though the root ends in a vowel, the personal affix is not here, because the stem ends in a consonant. The allomorph variation here is phonemically conditioned in the same way as indicated before.

** The intrusion of *i* between *ch* and *l* is for the purpose of avoiding the clashing of consonants.

* Early As. example—*āniyāche*. Kakati points out that the same old type of forms with *iyā > i* *āch* has come down to med. As. but the meaning has changed. Dr. Chatterji, on the other hand, holds : "this *iyā*-form fell into disuse in later Assamese." A pertinent question may be raised here : whether the *iyā* and *i*-forms are structurally akin. In *āniyāche*, Kakati finds

compared to Skt. *Āṛtaḥ vartate* or old Persian *abavam asti* (Darius' Inscription.).

5. Compound verbs and their structural features are conspicuous by their absence in Kakati's treatment of the verb system. A comparative study of the structural as well as the inflectional features of the compound verbs and the periphrastic tense (both are sequence structures) would have completed the list of items under the verb system of the language. Compound verb is a very widely used verbal sequence structure, usage of which goes back to the date of the Caryā : *tuṭi geli, cauri nile*, etc.

Though the components form a single whole, they are never fused together. In other words, the compound verbs constitute a syntactic word group, and the phrasally bound unit as a whole bears a resultant meaning. Two types of structures are generally used:—

(a) Substantive & auxiliary root morpheme.—*māt dile* (=called), *bhāl pāṓ* (=like) etc where the first component enforces the meaning and the recruitment of the second component renders the phrasally bound structure the status of a verb as a whole.

(b) Infinite verb + finite verb—*bahi paril*=became seated > sat down, *kaba dharile*=began speaking, here the inflected root (though an auxiliary morpheme, it has the semblance of being the principal one) denotes the “mode” of action and “aspect” of the verb (the infinite one).

The second members are, however, “semantic auxiliaries,” though their basic meaning is merely functional here, they constitute the inflectible member recruiting the tense and person morphemes as desired. Secondly, the auxiliary morpheme in (b) is a variable item depending on the speaker's intended sense.—*bahi paril/bahi thākil, kaba dharile/kaba khujile/kaba lāgile* etc. The same component is normally a substitutable item, but sometimes substitution may not be valid at all. e.g. *coku* (eye) + \sqrt{uth} / $\sqrt{mār}$ etc. are different word groups conveying different meanings whereas *bhāl* + $\sqrt{pā}$ (in Bengali — $\sqrt{lāg}$) constitute a closely knit unit. The substantive + auxiliary exhibit combination of nuclei which in most cases do not carry the

an unclipped form of the substantive verb $\sqrt{āch}$, but if the principal verb contains *iyā*, then occurrence of the atonic *ch* + *e* (personal termination) seems more plausible. Skt *ānītaḥ vartate*—having brought remains > has brought. This form in Assamese contains a true compound base. On the other hand, *āni āche* suggests remains bringing > has been bringing, where *āni* may be a gerund in *i* (<*skt-ya*> *ia* (Pkt/Apa, Caryā > *karia*, Assamese *i* > *kari*, Bengali-*iā* > —*kari-ā* > *kariyā*). The meaning also satisfies our analysis.

total meaning of the meanings of components, and thus become idiomatic expressions.*

5.1. The structural contrast between the compound tense (C.T.) and the compound verb (C.V.) is indicated here briefly.

(a) The peripheral constituent of C.T. is always \sqrt{ach} in its atonic status. It is a fused bound morpheme. The same constituent, a substitutable item, is a free morpheme.

(b) The sequence structure thus created by fusion of two components in C.T. is not an inflectional phrase, but the components placed together (though not structurally tied together) in C.V. constitute a phrasally bound unit.

(c) C.T. being a structural unit carries the accent on the head of the word while the semantic units of the C.V. are uttered between time and space, hence the components bear their own accent.

dhar'-i-ch-ō— $\sqrt{\text{catch}}$, $\sqrt{\text{hold}}$

lág dhar'-i-ch-ō— $\sqrt{\text{ask for company}}$

(d) The external distribution feature varies. The resultant unit and the inflectible component of a C.V. can individually occur in the same structural environment—

tetiya teō bahi paril/tetiya teō paril.

teō kari-chile/teō chile. x

That means the C.V. structure is endocentric and the C.T. structure is exocentric.

(e) C.T. constitutes an internal distribution class, because it has always the same morpheme as one of the immediate constituents.**

5.2. The inflection pattern of C.T. has already been outlined. A C.V. can itself be inflected in the form of a C.T. (*bahi par*)-i-ch-ō/ (*khāi pelā*)-i-che. Secondly, a C.T. is inflectionally defective in having no future conjugation, whereas a C.V. can be conjugated in all tenses—

kar-i-ch-φ-ō/ *kar-i-ch-i-l-ō*

but, *kar-i-ch-i-m* x

whereas—

(*lui par*)-φ-ō/ (*lui par*)-i-l-ō and (*lui par*)-i-m.

* "Compounds are susceptible to idiomaticity"—Langacker, R.W. *Fundamentals of Linguistic Analyses*, 1972, p. 77.

** "An internal distribution class consists of a set of form all of which have the same morpheme as one of the immediate constituents"—Nida, E. —*Morphology*, (1949), 6.13.1, p. 110.

Banikanta Kakati and Non-Aryan Elements in Assamese

Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya

Kakati discussed in the twenties of this century the extent of probable non-Aryan influences with special reference to the N.I.A. Assamese under three heads : phonological, morphological and glossarial, or rather syntactical as evident in the concluding chapter of his work, *AFD* (1941.) I shall add a number of new entries with statements keeping in view the progress of research undertaken by a host of scholars in India and abroad on Sino-Tibetan or Indo-Tibetic studies : Robert Shafer, S.N. Wolfenden, Fr. Hermanns, Robbins Burling and others.

Kakati was a pioneer linguist of North-Eastern India. He followed the monumental work of Chatterji and also took notice of the contributions of Grierson, Bloch and others to prove the identity of the Assamese language, analysing its structure and tracing the non-Aryan lexical correspondences in Assamese vocabulary with special reference to the Austro-Asiatic influences (Khasi, Kol-Munda, Malayan etc.), the Tibeto-Burman influences (Bodo etc.) as well as the Thai (Ahom) influences in respect of the place-names, river-names and general vocables (§§ 57—89, *AFD*, 1941). Chatterji endorsed the views of Kakati and also welcomed further Tibeto-Burman Bodo (Boro) traces suggested by Bishnu Rabha, Rupnath Brahma, Robert Shafer etc. on different occasions.

It is very difficult to summarise the findings of Banikanta Kakati in the domain of extra-Aryan linguistic evidences based on the learned contributions of Skeat & Blagden, Grierson, Wolfenden, Dundas and others as noted in the select list of books consulted by him. He really paved the way for a systematic study of socio-linguistic as well as mytho-religious elements present in the North-Eastern Indian culture and civilisation. Kakati had more library work to his credit, while K.R. Medhi had more fieldwork as evident in his *Asamiyā Vyākaraṇ āru Bhāṣātātva*, (Gauhati, 1936). Medhi was very much particular in citing examples from non-Aryan languages of Sino-Ti-

betan, Austric (Kol-Munda) or Austro-Asiatic (Mundari, Santhal, Kharia), and Dravidian (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam) families. Kakati did not analyse clearly the Dravidian elements present in the Assamese language as a substratum, while Chatterji dealt with the Dravidian elements in the Indo-Aryan with special reference to Bengali, and Medhi took special notice of the Dravidian elements in Assamese. Medhi, in his book, described with examples the different elements in Assamese, namely, (a) Sanskrit elements, (b) pre-Vedic elements, (c) Vedic elements, (d) Prakritic elements, (e) Tibeto-Burman and Taic elements, (f) Dravidian elements, (g) Austro-Asiatic elements and (h) Islamic elements. (Introduction : pp xxii—Lxviii)

I cite the following entries from Kakati as examples of the Malayan elements which are his interpretations based on Skeat and Blagden :

Assamese	Asutric (Malayan element)
1. <i>ā-tā</i> , grand-father	<i>ator, ala</i> , grand-father, ancestor
2. <i>ābu</i> , grand-mother	<i>abuh, abu</i> , father
3. <i>bopāi, bāpā</i> , father	<i>bapai, bapa</i> , father
4. <i>āi</i> , mother	<i>ai</i> , father
5. <i>kakāi, kākā</i> , elder-brother	<i>kaka</i> , elder-brother
6. <i>bāi</i> , elder-sister : a term of address to an elderly lady.	<i>bhai, ibhai</i> (Mon), elder sister : <i>ba, bii</i> mother
7. <i>bagā</i> , white	<i>bak biog</i>
8. <i>beli</i> , girl, daughter	<i>betina</i> , girl, woman

Medhi had his own way of interpretation as to the derivations of Assamese words :

Assamese word	Meaning	Derivation
(1) <i>āi</i>	mother	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> { <div> Kachari <i>āi</i>, Bhutiya <i>āi</i> Chutiya <i>yoyo</i> (=mother), Vedic <i>apī</i> (mother) </div> </div>

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(3) <i>dong</i>	irrigation channel	Kachari <i>dong</i> ; Garo <i>dongge</i> ; Mikir <i>dong</i> (=channel, drain, irrigation channel)

River-names

(4) Dikhau Dikrai Diju etc.	} Kachari or Chutiya <i>di</i> water +	cf Kachari <i>dwi/doi</i> , Garo <i>chi</i> Chutiya <i>ji</i> Bhutiya <i>chu</i> Ahom <i>ting</i> (=a chasm) + <i>rui</i> (=a hill stream)
Kalang (Mikir)		cf Mikir <i>klong</i> (=floor); <i>a-klong</i> (=downward) etc. etc.

The phonological peculiarities of Assamese in imparting alveolar sounds to O.I.A. cerebrals and dentals are due to Tibeto-Burman (Boro) influences as described by Kakati (*AFD*, p. 60, 193). The Tibeto-Burman or Indo-Tibetic Boro elements are noticed in fronting O.I.A. palatals to dentals in Assamese (*ODBL*, p. 79). The phenomena of vowel mutation, vowel harmony, spontaneous nasalisation and aspiration of initial and medial O.I.A. stops are suspected to be non-Aryan influences in Assamese and other Indic languages.

Kakati had enumerated the morphological influences in respect of reduplication of words, origin of enclitic numeratives or definitives, use of personal affixes to nouns of relationship, origin of plural suffixes, a number of derivatives and past-participles, prefixation of negative elements in verbroots from non-Aryan points of view. Apart from the long list of glossarial correspondences, the syntactic similarities between the Indo-Aryan Assamese and the Tibeto-Burmic Boro were emphasised by J.D. Anderson in the nineteenth century while he supplemented a number of Kachari (Boro) rhymes and tales to the learned grammatical work of the Reverend Sydney Endle. I endorsed the views of Anderson and Endle in my research work *A Descriptive Analysis of Boro Language*.

The recent researches in descriptive linguistics and the publication of a number of monographs embodying the studies of different spoken Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic languages have provided materials for comparative and lexico-statistical studies, and it is hoped that within a decade most of the languages of Arunachal, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Assam will be described systematically under the auspices of the Central Institute of Indian Languages and the Linguistic Society of India.

In the matter of derivation, one will meet a number of similarities or correspondences following the lines of studies indicated by the Sino-Tibetic scholars which show that in some ancient periods, the Indo-Aryan and the Tibeto-Burman (Indo-Tibetic) had come into close contacts and both the families of languages could be related to some Proto Indo-Aryan Tibetic source or dynasty of somewhat unknown origin :—

- Examples : (1) Boro (Tibeto-Burman) *doi/dui*, water, Garo *chi*, Chutiya *ji*, Bhutiya *chu*, Sanskrit *to-yam*, Tripuri *tui/luy*, Tibetan *ti*, water.
- (2) Boro *āng*, I (self), Garo *nga*, Dimasa *āng*, Sanskrit *angga* self/limb; also, Sanskrit *aham*.
- (3) Boro *hā/hu/he*, Garo *ā/e/a*, 'land' : cf *hāzou* (*ha* 'land', *gozou* 'high'), a place name (Hazo) in Kamrup district sacred for the Hayagriva temple of Vishnu, also worshipped by Buddhists; similarly Hekra, Hawra, Agia, Heramdoi, Habra/Howra (*hā-gōbrāp*), Hakma (*hā-khomā*), Habraghat, Habrajuli, Agra (*hā-gorā*), Hugli (*hu/hā-golow*), Hadira (*hā-gidirā* 'hard land') etc.
- (4) Boro *law/lao* (*gōlaw*) 'long', *di/dōi* (river/water); *lāiti* long water or long river i.e. Brahmaputra/Lauhitya (latterday Sanskritisation of *lāiti* as Lauhitya 'red river')
- (5) *thāi/pīthāi* 'fruit', *thāikerā/thāikhrā*, an acid fruit.

Non-Aryan elements in Indo-Aryan (Indic) Assamese and other N.E.A. languages may be analysed further if we can gather materials of the surrounding languages of different families of Northeast India.

Banikanta Kakati's Contribution to Dialectological Studies in Assamese

Upendranath Goswami

Banikanta Kakati's *magnum opus*, *Assamese, its Formation and Development*, is, in his own words, "an effort at drawing up a preliminary sketch of the principal sounds and forms of the Assamese language". In the words of Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan, this book "marks a distinct achievement in the history of Assamese scholarship. It deals, as the title indicates, with the growth of the Assamese language, and the treatment of the subject has been carried out throughout on approved scientific lines." He again writes : "Kakati establishes for the first time the individuality of Assamese, placing it in the proper perspective of its sister languages". In another place Dr. Bhuyan has remarked that Kakati's book "set at rest the old stand taken by some uncritical writers that the Assamese language is a mere *patois* of Bengali".

In order to have a complete picture of a language, a discussion about the position of its dialects, their mutual relationships, the reasons for the dialectal variations, the sub-dialectal forms, the reasons for their creations and the rise and growth of the standard language at different historical times, is indispensable. *Assamese, its Formation and Development* provides such a discussion. First of all, Kakati has quoted from Skeat regarding the conception of a dialect in this way : "when we talk of speakers of a dialect, we imply that they employ a provincial method of speech to which the man who has been educated to use the language of books is unaccustomed. Such a man finds that the dialect speaker frequently uses words or modes of expression which he does not understand or which are at any rate strange to him, and he is sure to notice that such words as seem to be familiar to him are, for the most part strangely pronounced". A linguistic term *patois* has also been used by Kakati and with adequate illustrations has proved that 'Assamese is not an off-shoot or *patois* of Bengali, but an independent speech'.

Dialectically, Kakati has divided Assamese into Eastern Assamese and Western Assamese. The spoken dialect of Sibsagar represents

betan, Austric (Kol-Munda) or Austro-Asiatic (Mundari, Santhal, Kharia), and Dravidian (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam) families. Kakati did not analyse clearly the Dravidian elements present in the Assamese language as a substratum, while Chatterji dealt with the Dravidian elements in the Indo-Aryan with special reference to Bengali, and Medhi took special notice of the Dravidian elements in Assamese. Medhi, in his book, described with examples the different elements in Assamese, namely, (a) Sanskrit elements, (b) pre-Vedic elements, (c) Vedic elements, (d) Prakritic elements, (e) Tibeto-Burman and Taic elements, (f) Dravidian elements, (g) Austro-Asiatic elements and (h) Islamic elements. (Introduction : pp xxii—Lxviii)

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- (4) Boro *law/lao* (*gōlaw*) 'long', *di/dōi* (river/water); *lāiti* long water or long river i.e. Brahmaputra/Lauhitya (latterday Sanskritisation of *laiti* as Lauhitya 'red river')
- (5) *thāi/pīthāi* 'fruit', *thaikerā/thaikhrā*, an acid fruit.

Non-Aryan elements in Indo-Aryan (Indic) Assamese and other N.I.A. languages may be analysed further if we can gather materials of the surrounding languages of different families of Northeast India.

Banikanta Kakati's Contribution to Dialectological Studies in Assamese

Upendranath Goswami

Banikanta Kakati's *magnum opus*, *Assamese, its Formation and Development*, is, in his own words, "an effort at drawing up a preliminary sketch of the principal sounds and forms of the Assamese language". In the words of Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan, this book "marks a distinct achievement in the history of Assamese scholarship. It deals, as the title indicates, with the growth of the Assamese language, and the treatment of the subject has been carried out throughout on approved scientific lines." He again writes : "Kakati establishes for the first time the individuality of Assamese, placing it in the proper perspective of its sister languages". In another place Dr. Bhuyan has remarked that Kakati's book "set at rest the old stand taken by some uncritical writers that the Assamese language is a mere *patois* of Bengali".

In order to have a complete picture of a language, a discussion about the position of its dialects, their mutual relationships, the reasons for the dialectal variations, the sub-dialectal forms, the reasons for their creations and the rise and growth of the standard language at different historical times, is indispensable. *Assamese, its Formation and Development* provides such a discussion. First of all, Kakati has quoted from Skeat regarding the conception of a dialect in this way : "when we talk of speakers of a dialect, we imply that they employ a provincial method of speech to which the man who has been educated to use the language of books is unaccustomed. Such a man finds that the dialect speaker frequently uses words or modes of expression which he does not understand or which are at any rate strange to him, and he is sure to notice that such words as seem to be familiar to him are, for the most part strangely pronounced". A linguistic term *patois* has also been used by Kakati and with adequate illustrations has proved that 'Assamese is not an off-shoot or *patois* of Bengali, but an independent speech'.

Dialectically, Kakati has divided Assamese into Eastern Assamese and Western Assamese. The spoken dialect of Sibsagar represents

the eastern variety. In Kakati's words "the language from Sadiga, the easternmost frontier down to Gauhati exhibits a certain homogeneity and hardly presents any notable point of difference from the spoken dialect of Silsagar, the capital of the late Ahom kings. And for purposes of literature this dialect is generally regarded as the standard language". Western Assamese is sub-divided into the dialects of the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara. The spoken dialects of the Goalpara district, according to him "seem to have been greatly contaminated with admixtures of the Rajbansi dialect—the dialect that was evolved under the domination of the Koch Kings of Koch-Bihar, whose descendants ruled over Goalpara and contiguous portions of Kamrup." In the words of Grierson 'the dialect of western and southern Goalpara is pure Rajbansi'. As mentioned by Charuchandra Sanyal in his book, *The Rajbansis of North Bengal*, the dialect of the "Rajbansis of Siliguri sub-division of Dargiling, undivided Jalpaiguri, Coch-Bihar, Goalpara of Assam and North Rangpur is a local dialect of Bengali. Grierson has termed it as 'Rajbansi dialect'. In fact it is the spoken language of the villagers of the above areas. This spoken language differs in many cases widely from the standard colloquial Bengali." On the other hand, this Rajbansi dialect resembles 'in many cases widely' the Kamrupi dialect of western Assam.¹ The reasons for this are not far to seek. Assam from ancient times was known as Kamarupa till the end of the Koch rule (17th century) and ancient Kamarupa comprised the whole of North Bengal including Cooch-Bihar, and the Rangpur and Jalpaiguri districts of Bengal.²) As also put by Kakati "it was under the patronage of kings outside the western limit of modern Assam, under the patronage of the kings of Kamatāpur, fourteen miles to the south west of Cooch-Bihar, that the earliest Assamese books were written. Even now the spoken language of North Bengal and Western Assam (the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara) is substantially the same and seems to form one dialect group." Kakati even did not hesitate to say that "the whole of North Bengal including Koch-Bihar, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and also perhaps Dinajpur, should have been included with Assam,if the territorial readjustment were to be made on the basis of linguistic homogeneity. Such territorial distribution would have given a proper perspective to the formation and development of the Assamese language."

1. Refer to U. N. Goswami's paper, *The Language of North Bengal and Western Assam* : Journal of the University of Gauhati, Vols. XXI—XXIII, 1974.
2. Kakati, B. (ed.) *Aspects of Early Assamese Literature*, p. 2.

In between the standard colloquial of Sibsagar in the east and the dialect of Goalpara in the west stands the Kamrupi dialect. Kakati has observed that the district of Kamrup is not a homogeneous dialectical area. There are different dialects in different localities. He has mentioned about five such sub-dialectical varieties of the Kamrupi dialect. He has also mentioned that the points of difference amongst these varieties are "mostly confined to details of phonetics and hardly spread over to morphology, and vocabulary. Recent investigation has, however, revealed that the sub-dialectical varieties of Kamrupi may be grouped mainly into three divisions—western, central and southern. The variety spoken in the area comprising Barpeta, Sundaridiya, Patbausi, Bhabanipur etc. is western, that of Nalbari and its surrounding areas is central and that of Palasbari, Chaygong, Boko etc. is southern. The central dialect is the most widespread one. Among these varieties some divergences exist, particularly in phonology. Vocables also differ accordingly. Between the western and the central varieties some morphological and intonational divergences are also noticed. These divergences, however, are not so great as to create mutual unintelligibility among the speakers of Kamrupi in different parts of the district. In some areas a combination of features of two sub-dialects is noticeable. Still more, in certain places a peculiar form of speech is seen to be prevailing. In many places some peculiar vocables are found. A detailed and minute study of the divergences among the varieties of Kamrupi will provide materials for a complete Dialect Geography of Assam.

The causes for these dialectical variations are the natural barriers like the Brahmaputra and many other big rivers running through the district. In some places forests form the dividing line. The means of communication was also meagre till very recent times. Again, as pointed out by Kakati, "Western Assam was never for a long period under any dominant power. It was the cockpit of several fighting forces—the Koches, the Muhammadans and the Ahoms, and political fortunes passed from one power to another in different times. A steady commanding central influence that gives homogeneity to manners as to speech was never built up by any ruling power in western Assam". These variations may be due to the absorption of people having different linguistic habits in the region. In the words of Bloomfield "in countries that have been long settled by the same speech community the local differences are much greater".

The differences between the standard Assamese and the Kamrupi dialect have been worked out in some detail by Kakati.

According to him "the differences between Eastern and Western Assamese are wide and range over the whole field of phonology, morphology and, not infrequently, vocabulary". Actually, the difference in vocabularies between the standard colloquial and the Kamrupi dialect is also great. It spreads even to common objects like fruits, flowers, animals, birds, creepers, vegetables, utensils and words connected with marriage, handloom parts, kinship terms, words connected with cooking, ceremony and other miscellaneous words. Even in proverbs, riddles and idiomatic expressions great divergences between the two dialects are noticeable. In ascertaining the causes of these dialectical differences Kakati has said : "Beyond admixture of several peoples with varying phonetic habits and peculiarities, hardly any other reason can with sufficient accuracy be assigned at present to these points of dialectical difference". According to Otto Jespersen the most important cause of a language splitting into dialects is "not purely physical, but want of communication for whatever reason. Linguistic unity depends always on intercourse, on a community of life". In the words of C.F. Hockett "the speech of people who are in intimate contact with each other tends to be more uniform than that of people out of direct contact." Kamrup or western Assam remained as a separate political unit for a long time. Thus the social and cultural contact among the people of western and eastern Assam was not much. Kakati also has observed the situation and, therefore, he has remarked : "The Shans built their kingdom and consolidated their power in Eastern Assam with the modern town of Sibsagar as their capital and brought the whole tract down to the border of the modern district of Kamrup permanently under their sway. It was towards the close of their reign that modern Kamrup came within the compass of the Shan rule, but even then the Shan domination in Kamrup was fitful and it was often challenged by contending powers."

Kakati has discussed some of the characteristics of the Kamrupi dialect in detail and has shown its influence in the formation of certain words in the St. coll. also. In connection with the phenomenon of stress Kakati writes "The stress in the Kamrupi dialect in Western Assam is dominantly initial whereas the stress in the St. coll. of eastern Assam is medial. The dominant initial stress of Kamrupi causes such violent changes in the following syllable as to make words almost unrecognisable. Owing to the prevailing initial stress the medial vowels are dropped out of pronunciation altogether. The tendency of the Kamrupi dialect is to shorten a trisyllabic word to a disyllabic one and a polysyllabic word to a trisyllabic one". In

the application of the process of epenthesis Kakati has stated that "It is so exceedingly prevalent that it disguises words beyond recognition by causing diphthongisation." In the field of Morphology Kakati has discussed the plural formations of the Kamrupi dialect in some detail. The absence of the change of *a* before a following *ā* to *ā* and the retention²¹ of medial aspiration in certain words in the St. coll. have been, according to Kakati, due to the influence of the Kamrupi dialect. Some of the examples for these are *āddā* 'ginger' *ādhdā* 'half', *sārtuā* 'fertile', *uthi* 'something dried like the cow-dung', *cothā* 'the fourth day' etc.

To quote J. Vendryes, the formation of "the common languages, as well as their development and disintegration, are regulated by historical causes outside the sphere of language, namely by the movements of civilisation itself." In the case of Assamese also this is true. Assamese is a Magadhan speech. Coming from the regions of Videha-Magadha it entered Kamarupa or western Assam where this speech was first characterised as Assamese. This is evident from the remarks of Hiuen Tsang who visited the kingdom of Kāmarūpa in the first half of the seventh century A.D. As put by Kakati, Hiuen Tsang "perhaps referred to some individuality of the Kāmarūpa (early Assamese) language when he spoke of it as 'slightly differing' from that of Mid-India".

It is in this Kāmarūpa (Kamrupi) language that the early Assamese literature was mainly written. Upto the seventeenth century as the centres of art, literature and culture were confined within western Assam and the poets and the writers hailed from this place, the language of this part also acquired prestige. With the decline of the Koch power by the seventeenth century, the centre of literary importance was shifted from western Assam to the Ahom court in eastern Assam. As remarked by Kakati, "so far literary activities were carried on in western Assam under the patronage of kings of either Kamatāpura or Koch-Bihar. But with the consolidation of the Ahom power in eastern Assam and the decline of the Koch Kingdom in western Assam, the centre of literary importance was shifted from western to eastern Assam." The Ahoms were in power upto 1826 A.D. In this year Assam passed into the hands of the East India Company. In 1836 two remarkable members of the American Baptist Mission first set foot on Assamese soil. Among other things a printing machine was a part of their missionary equipments. The Missionaries made Sibsagar the centre of their activities and used the dialect of

that locality for their literary purposes. In the words of Kakati, "In 1846 they started a monthly periodical called *Arunodaya* and in 1848 N. Brown published one Assamese grammar. The first Assamese-English dictionary compiled by M. Bronson was published by the Missionaries in 1867. Under the influence of the Missionaries, a set of native writers grew up and books and periodicals in the language of eastern Assam were multiplied. Thus the traditions of the Ahom court supported by the mission press established the language of eastern Assam as the literary language of the entire province." Thus Kakati has given a clear history of the rise and growth of the standard language of Assam.

From the discussion above it has become clear that Kakati could build a strong basis for the dialectological study of Assamese in his monumental work *Assamese, its Formation and Development*. From the time of the publication of the work (1941) the study of dialects has developed in its various aspects. It is hoped that scholars of Assam will in future give due attention to the study of the dialects and languages of Assam along the modern scientific lines and for this, Kakati's book will always remain indispensable. In the preparation of the present writer's thesis, *A study on Kamrupi, a Dialect of Assamese*, the said book has been his constant companion. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan rightly predicted that Kakati's book will "serve, for many years to come, as a model, guide and stimulus to such investigation".

Kakati and Foreign Loans in Assamese*

Robert Shafer.

Although much has been published on the effect of Dravidian and of Austroasian on the Aryan languages of India, Banikanta Kakati seems to have been the first to note specific lexical parallels between Tibeto-Burmic and Assamese.¹ Since more of his comparisons were between Assamese and Austroasian languages of the Malay peninsula, I point out here some equally good Tibeto-Burmic comparisons, as these are closer geographically to Assam.

Assamese *āmai* mother's equal, Austroasian *amai* mother, aunt, Burmese *āmai* mother.

Ass. *ābu* grandmother, AA *abu*, *abuh* father, Bur. *bhui* grandfather (Bur.—ui=Old Bodish [Classical Tibetan]—u), Luśei *pu*.

Ass. *bagā* white, AA *bak* (Bah), *biog* (Temb), Garo (gi)-*bok*, *šobok*. Chittagong dialect *bak*, chinese *bok*.

Ass. *ā-tā* grandfather, AA *ata* ancestor, Sbalti, Burig (West Bodish) *a-ta* father.

Kakati noted² that the Bodo equivalent for "water" is *dui* in the plains and Western Assam, but *di* in the hills and eastern Assam, and concluded that in names of rivers of Assam such as *di-hong* the first part was Bodo. But in Section 85, after he had listed *tu*, *tiu*, *du*, *diu* "water" for Austroasian, he mentioned other names such as *tī-hu*, *-pām*, *-yak*, *-rāp*, and in northern Bengal *tī-sta*, as well as *di-hong*, which leads the reader to infer that he thought them possibly borrowings from "Austrie".

However so many Tibeto-Burmic languages have words for "water" that are closer geographically and phonetically, that the

* Published in the *Journal of the University of Gauhati*, Vol. XV : pp. 33-4.

1. *Assamese. Its Formation and Development*, Gauhati, 1941.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

possibility seems remote of the *li-* of the above river names coming from languages now spoken in the Malay peninsula. Among these are Garo *li* < *li*³, Bandara *li*³; Midzu *li*; Haka (Lai) and Mara (Lakher) groups of Kukish *li*; Toto *li*; Magari *di*. The question is rather which Tibeto-Burmie language named a particular river in Assam, and Assamese students of the Tibeto-Burmie languages could best do this by recording geographical names in those languages.⁴ The solution will depend to some extent upon determining the source of the rest of the compound.

This is not necessarily a contest Sino-Tibetan vs. Austroasian, for I have shown elsewhere the possibility that the two families are distantly related or that both have borrowed from a substratum language.⁵

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3. For the comparative phonetics of the Bodic Division of Sino-Tibetan, see my "Classification of the Northernmost Naga Languages". *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 39 (1953), 225—264 (with many typographical errors I was not given a chance to correct).
 4. For a model I would suggest for thoroughness A. S. Barrett, "The Ethno-geography of the Pomo and Neighbouring Indians", *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 6 (1908), 1—332, especially pp. 118 ff. on modern and old village sites. But since Kakati is discussing river names in particular, probably the easiest method would be to get detailed outline maps of the rivers of Assam (or, if none are available, to make xerox copies of such a detailed map, blocking out the extraneous detail) and write in the native names of the rivers, one map to a language or dialect.
 5. "Etudes sur l'austroasien", *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 48 (1952), 111—158.

Banikanta Kakati as a Critic

Dilip Barua

All great men embody certain aspects of national aspiration and Banikanta Kakati fulfilled the incipient longing of the newly awakened Assam of the early decades of this century for academic achievement. So it is primarily as a scholar that Kakati lives in our memory. But the scholar, the teacher and the critic are always the same person, especially in the early stages in the growth of a literature or culture. Banikanta understood this clearly. In his criticism of *Nāmghoṣā*¹ of Sri Madhabdev he quoted a parable from Ramkrishna Paramhansa to drive this point home :

Three men hearing of a beautiful garden set out to see it. They had to go a long way suffering innumerable hardships and discovered to their utter dismay that the garden was surrounded by an impregnable wall. With great efforts they managed to scale the wall and sitting on top of it enjoyed the stupendous beauty of the garden. Two of them were so overwhelmed by it that they jumped in and decided to stay there permanently. But one returned to tell about it to his friends. In the truest sense this person who returned to communicate his knowledge is the ideal teacher.

He is also the ideal critic. He acquires his knowledge through considerable efforts, experiences the beauty and grandeur of art at first hand, and communicates his well thought-out opinions through his criticism. Being a lifelong teacher and researcher Kakati was supremely qualified to be the first major critic of Assamese literature.

Modern Assamese literature in the true sense of the term began with the literary journal *Jonāki* in the 1890's with Chandra Kumar Agarwalla and Lakshmi Nath Bezbaroa as the guiding stars. Since then a considerable body of creative literature sprang up with

1, *Purani Asamiyā Sāhitya* (1940) ; referred to in the body of this essay as *Ancient Assamese Literature*, p. 91.

English romantic writers as an inspiration and the achievements of Bengali literature as the touchstone. This was a period of enthusiasm for English education and Kakati struck the imagination of the people of Assam by standing first in the Intermediate Arts Examination of Calcutta University in 1913 when the jurisdiction of the University comprised Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Later securing a first class in M.A. and subsequently Ph.D. by his study on the growth and development of the Assamese Language, Kakati confirmed all the hopes that his countrymen laid in him from his school days. But Kakati did not settle down to remain simply a Professor of English or the linguist that he trained himself to be, but delved eagerly into the study of Assam's literary, religious and cultural heritage. He thus carried forward the creative impulse generated by Bezbarua and others of the Jonaki age with its primary romantic sensibility and its ennobling enthusiasm for carving out a glorious identity for the literature and culture of Assam.

An age of enthusiasm and expansion is not usually the right background for the growth of criticism. In such an age appreciation and encouragement rather than discrimination and methodical assessment constitute the norms of criticism. It is, therefore, natural that serious and well cultivated minds enriched with the acquaintance of world literature did not apply themselves generously to the study of contemporary writings. Two of Assam's most gifted sons Ananda Ram Barua and Krishna Kanta Handique found expression of their talents in the study of Sanskrit literature. It is therefore a rare good fortune for our literature and culture that Banikanta Kakati and Surya Kumar Bhuyan turned their attention to their immediate cultural heritage. Through their study of Assam's ancient history, culture and literature and by their direct involvement in socio-cultural issues these two great names laid the basis of modern research in those fields. A sense of futility often oppressed them as there were no appreciative audience and the publication of works was often thankless and unremunerative. Besides criticism of a literature long nurtured in the precincts of religious institutions ridden with caste and communal feelings often landed critics into bitter controversies. In fact, Kakati's initiation into criticism came through such a controversy when he took up his pen in defence of Lakshminath Bezbarua, under the pseudonym of Bhabananda Pathak, against the caste oriented criticism of Rajani Kanta Bordoloi and others. Though as criticism proper these essays do not interest us, Kakati exhibited here his excellence as a master

of polemics; he showed formidable command over language and displayed his profound knowledge of Sanskrit literature and other ancient learning. It is through these essays that he seems to have developed a sense of serious commitment to the lifelong task of compilation, understanding, appreciation and explication of Vaishnava literature and its religious tradition in Assam. Thus the mantle of Lakshminath fell on Banikanta. It insured him against silence. The pursuit of literature and research in his field became for him a path of total fulfilment. He became what he was, not a mere academic or professional man of letters, but a scholar and teacher who through his writing and his life embodied a way of life. Anyone who reads his essays on *Ancient Assamese Literature* (1940) cannot but notice his transparent submission to a set of values which for him were most poetically enshrined in the poetry of Madhavdev. This makes his essay on *Nāmghoṣā* his greatest individual critical contribution and a mirror of his own spiritual quest.

We have said earlier that the literary milieu in which Kakati grew up was fostered on Romantic sensibilities or the aesthetics of the Romantic poets or to be more precise, on Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861). According to this view, self-expression was the highest purpose of the arts. So the burden of Kakati's assessment of Vaishnava literature was to prove that they are not simply religious tracts, but the expression of supreme personal devotion. *Nāmghoṣā* scintillates with Madhabdev's deeply felt memory of his deceased *guru* Sri Sankardev, it embodies his profoundly realised value of humility; and lastly it lays down the glorious and miraculous power of faith in Krishna which the poet cherished with unswerving devotion and supreme self-absorption. Kakati also draws our attention to the historical moment when his great literary work was composed. It was an evil time ridden with communal faction when Madhavdev had to live in exile; but even then he had no peace. So *Nāmghoṣā* came at a critical juncture of the new Vaishnava religion, as a cry from the heart, soaked in profound remembrance of the departed *guru* and communicating the resonance of an unflinching faith. Such an evaluation lifted his work from the dull catalogue of ancient or religious literature to the place of a living poetic utterance demanding an immediate response.

Kakati was an avid reader of Dr. Johnson, whose remark made in connection with Dryden's critical achievement, must have been known to him 'He only is the master who keeps the mind in

pleasing activity'. In Kakati's criticism one often finds a competent effort towards such an engagement of our minds. He constantly illuminates our perception. One of his favourite devices is to clinch an argument with the help of a simile often drawn from nature in the manner of the Romantic poets. Of course sometimes these similes become rather impressionistic. But their objects were often achieved; our appreciation of the works was enriched. Whatever the merit of such a critical method the purpose with which Kakati employed it was more than fulfilled. Vaishnava literature became a part of our living culture and a rich tradition of music, dramatic literature, dance and poetics opened for study and research as well as for popular absorption, which gave a new sense of identity to the people of Assam. Kakati thus carried forward the torch lit by Bezbaroa but their stance and strides were different.

Bezbaroa was pure enthusiasm; his religion often appeared as unabashed patriotism. As in the following :

Of all the religious scriptures of the world, Shri Sankardev's *Kirtan* is the crowning glory. That is why it is the bounden duty of every Assamese to stake when necessary his insignificant human existence for the preservation of the flag of Sri Sankardev which flies on the pillar of triumph of Assam's ancient heritage.

In such a bravado true criticism cannot flourish. It was therefore left to Kakati to analyse the various aspects of Vaishnava literary heritage and assess them through a comparative critical method. The following is a fair example of his manner of criticism :

In profundity of thought and the intimacy of feeling (the sad hymns of Madhabdev's *Bargit* and *Nāmghoṣā*) may be compared to the hymns of all great religions of the world. It is difficult to find examples of hymns with such sense of humility and pathos in other Vaishnava literatures of India. The only examples one can think of are a few hymns by Tukaram, the Vaishnava poet of Maharashtra.

It is through such analysis that Kakati showed the way for future researchers and brought to the study of Assamese literature a comparative historical as well as aesthetic assessment. Kakati who was Professor of Assamese and the Dean of the faculty of Arts at Gauhati University, after its establishment in 1948, had also the unique privi-

lege to guide and initiate some of the most important critical appraisals of Sri Sankardev and his times.

We have mentioned earlier that Kakati's affiliation, so far as modern literature is concerned, was primarily to the Romantic poets and critics. Among nineteenth century critics the influence of Arnold and Pater is also discernible. But we have no intention of examining them in detail in this paper. What we propose to do here is to look for some consistent attitude which might give his critical efforts a kind of theoretical base.

Though Kakati was examining primarily ancient Assamese literature which were mostly derived from religious contexts, he took pains to point out that their excellence lay mostly in their literary qualities. Didacticism or purveying of religious and philosophical truth are no part of true literary glory. His basic search was therefore to find how much of the poet's self-expression was embodied in this literature, how much of the religion and philosophy in these works was soaked in through intimate self-absorption or how much of their religion was a record of personal disquietude resulting from single-minded devotion to their faith. All these points come out sharply in his appreciation of Madhavdev's *Nāmghoṣā* :

The profound philosophical truths of *Nāmghoṣā* by themselves cannot claim any literary merit. Because philosophical doctrines are always comprehended by the intellect, whereas literature must be absorbed through our feelings. In the religious views of *Nāmghoṣā* there is no literary appeal. As literature its importance lies in the expression of its profound devotional feelings. In the realm of devotion doctrines do not count, nomenclature does not raise barriers and it does not matter whether you worship Ram, Krishna, Siva, Durga, Christ or Muhammad. Here is only intent self-absorption and the overwhelming disquietude of the soul. (op. cit. p. 94)

Thus, Kakati found fulfilment of the aesthetics of feeling and self-expression in the religious poetry of the Vaishnava age. In such eloquent analysis of the effects of poetry one notices Kakati's impressionistic approach to criticism. We have said earlier that Pater's influence was discernible in many of Kakati's appreciations. The doctrine of self-absorption has a Paterine tone. But more so is his habit of introducing similes to bring home his final impression. It seems Kakati occasionally felt like Pater who said that 'the first step

towards seeing one's objects as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly.¹ The danger of this criticism, however, is that the impression of the critic may be temperamental and his discrimination may be limited by the peculiarities of his sensibilities. This vice of Kakati's critical writings, though in his own case ably restrained by his scholarly analysis, created a generation of critics in Assam who raised his mannerism into a method. Such criticism seeks to provide a substitute reading for the creative work and smothers the object of criticism by the weight of their impressionistic plumage. The great art of criticism, on the other hand, as Arnold pointed out,² depends in its ability 'to get out of the way and to let humanity decide'. The critic should surely try to illuminate the path of the readers but he must not seek to dazzle them.

However, it must be admitted that it is by virtue of his style and his scholarly habit of establishing connection with world literature, that he managed to get an audience among educated people for a study of ancient Assamese literature. Besides, as the contemporary literature was built eagerly on the Romantic inspiration, Kakati's criticism was ably suited for an appreciation of the new writers. In fact it is through Kakati's critical introductions that Assamese Romantic poetry acquired much of its self-consciousness. Their achievement on the other hand confirmed Kakati's critical norms. While discussing Raghu Nath Choudhury's *Dahikatarā* Kakati defined poetry as that power "which rouses withered thoughts of our mind into a delightful effervescence or agitation." So the critic also prided in creating similar mental excitement through his analysis and by seeking to illuminate both the poem and the poetic process for his readers. Kakati, therefore, often relied on elaborate comparison with examples of world literature and often from English literature to achieve that object.

Comparison as Arnoldian 'touchstone' can illuminate when comparisons are carefully picked and the distance of tradition and variation of age are properly accounted for. Kakati was usually quite discriminating in this art, but lapses were not totally absent. And the lapses often occur when motives for introducing such comparison

1. *Renaissance*. Here quoted from Tillyson's *Criticism and the Nineteenth Century* (1967) p. 109.

2. *Essays in Criticism*. Arnold, p. 208.

are not critical. That is when the purpose is not to illuminate our understanding of the work under review but to endow it with respectability by establishing some haloed connection. For instance, it does not achieve any critical understanding if we call the *Bargits* of Sankardev and Madhavdev by Herrick's so-called 'Noble Numbers'. In fact, it is dangerous because Herrick's variety of religious songs is extremely mundane and is religious only because they are addressed to God. The main concern of most of Herrick's poems was to describe the earthly pleasures he delighted in and the earthly pains he feared. The *Bargits*, on the other hand, are profoundly religious poems written in high classical style in contradistinction to folk songs. A more fruitful critical exercise would have been to analyse generic qualities of ancient Assamese literature in the light of established literary forms derived from European culture. The One Act Plays of the Vaishnava poets, or the numerous *Badh Kāvya*s or epic episodes dealing with the killing of giants offered some opportunities to Kakati for comparative study and whatever he said in these matters have been repeated by generations of students. One feels, however, that Kakati, because of his Romantic aesthetics, was rather impatient with detailed analysis of forms. His method is to blaze a trail through reference without examining detailed correspondence of the forms and characters held up for comparison. Only once did he embark on an elaborate comparison, that was between Hema Sundari of Ramsaraswati with Spenser's Una of the First book of the *Faerie Queene*. But he misinterpreted it in the same manner as nearly all nineteenth century art critics did when explaining Mona Lisa in terms of the modern concept of the fatal woman.

The limitations of Kakati are important as they define also the limitations of his inspiration. But we will be unhistorical in our estimate if we do not realise the profound contribution that he made towards popularisation of the study of ancient Assamese literature among his immediate contemporaries by establishing for it a critical framework. We have mentioned his limitation only because Kakati's mannerism should not be raised to a method as it was done by several later critics. It is time now to examine ancient literature in the framework of its own aesthetics. And Kakati was not unaware of it. He has rightly pointed out that the basic impulse of Vaishnava literature was to broadcast the profound truths of their faith and, secondly, to create pleasure-giving modes or forms for conveying them. And as, in the Renaissance literature of Europe, *virtu* embodied the form of the highest spiritual idea as well as the most cherished heroic

forms of action displayed through its noble dramatic literatures, similarly spiritual servitude and childlike relation to the deity constituted both the ideal in aspires for and the pleasurable experience they liked to contemplate in form of art. So it was not only dogmatism of doctrine but also the aesthetics of art which made them exclude everything else from their purview. It is evident in all Vaishnava translation and creative writings. So it would be wrong to impute any lack of spontaneity or originality in Vaishnava literature, as Kakati seems to imply in his essay 'Limitations of Ancient Literature'. For the Vaishnava poet aesthetics and worship commingled, which Kakati himself has superbly analysed in his study of Madhavdev's *Nāmghoṣā*. Therefore, when Shri Sankardev dismissed Pitambar's version of the elopement story of *Rukmini* on grounds that the poet focused on *Rukmini's* feminine pride, Sankardev was making both a moral and an aesthetic judgement. Kakati was performing a superb critical feat when he pointed out that *ekāgratā* (single-minded devotion), *byākulatā* (disquietude of the soul due to overpowering faith) and *tanmayatā* (total self-absorption) were the final yardsticks of the Vaishnava poet both for worship as well as values to be distilled in a work of art, whether it is a translation or an original poem. In modern critical term this may be called an emphasis on intensity: the intensity which Keats saw in *King Lear*, for instance, an intensity which burns out all dross.¹ Kakati says, in *Nāmghoṣā* Madhavdev has poured so much of intense devotional feelings from the core of his heart that he has lifted the feeling of servitude to God to the supreme status of poetry. Kakati did a great service to the popularisation of ancient literature by emphasizing these aspects of Vaishnava literature to which a modern audience could easily respond.

In appreciation of contemporary literature also Kakati emphasized the aspect of intensity in literature. Of course, his criticism in this field was limited to about half a dozen essays which featured mostly as prefaces to anthologies. In Ambikagiri Raichoudhury's *Tamī* (Thou), Kakati found poetry of the highest quality because it flew with terrible intensity of feeling falling like a waterfall in its short ten-lettered verse lines and in splendour of expression looking as resplendent as the shower of spray over the broken streams of the waterfall. Similarly, in Raghu Choudhury's poetry Kakati noticed the other great virtue of his triune aesthetic values, deep self-absorption. Commenting on the poetry of *Dahikarā* (name of a bird) he said 'a faint light of some distant land and a sweet charming voice that

1. Ref. Keats 'Sonnet on King Lear'; also *Letters* (Ed. Rolling) Vol. I, p. 192.

roused a long forgotten memory immersed the poet in total absorption of himself'. The first line of every stanza of this long title-poem of the anthology, Kakati further says, deepens the mode of self-absorption.

Raghu Choudhury was christened 'Bihagi Kavi' or the bird poet by Kakati and he is popularly known by this name. Choudhury had very great descriptive power, but, Kakati pointed out, it was not through power of description that verse became poetry. In order to endow such description of nature with the virtues of poetry the poet must be able to bathe his landscape with 'intense feelings.' All our joys and pain of hopes and frustrations of past, present and future must be inextricably mixed with such description. Choudhury's poetry was great because he achieved all that. The idea of personal self-expression as the touchstone of real poetry emerge again and again in Kakati's criticism. The *Prose Poems* of Jatindra Nath Dowarah, another important Romantic poet, he said, "trickled out of his soft bosom like gentle streams". To appreciate these pieces one must have some knowledge of Dowarah's life. He similarly pointed out that Ambikagiri's *Tumi*, in spite of its high mystical flights, 'expresses a personal passion for certain distinct lady-love in whose infatuation he was totally charmed'. Therefore, Kakati concludes, it will be wrong to look at *Tumi* as an artifice of imagination.

Here we reach one of the basic conflicts of the Romantic theory of art. Though art is built on imagination it must not give one the sense of deliberate composition; it must come naturally, spontaneously, and in later nineteenth century it developed into the cult of sincerity. As every artist soon realises this is a pretense, a pretense that has to be maintained through a conspiracy of impression that the artist is expected to make upon his audience. W.B. Yeats put it succinctly :

I said, 'A line will take us hours may be ;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been nought' (Adam's Curse
c.p.)

The fact that art involves some deliberate efforts, the Romantic critic likes to cover with metaphors of natural growth. In Kakati's criticism one notices a profusion of such comparisons : 'The seven sections of *Tumi* are like the seven colours of the sun's rays which together imagine the glory and beauty of the universal Overlord'.

Though Kakati made an analysis of the thought-content of the poem in its seven sections, he ultimately closed his analysis with the powerful image of the waterfall and the artistic splendour of the poem was made to appear as accidental as the pattern of resplendence caught in the spray of the broken streams of the waterfall over the rock. Such criticism has its attraction, and, in the hands of powerful, writers who are endowed with real sensitivity and power of scholarly comprehension, the judgement is bound to be forceful and moving. But this critical approach is not suitable for appreciating all manner of artistic expression. It is because of this, may be, that Kakati's contribution to the assessment of modern literature is rather meagre.

The limitation of Kakati's aesthetic norms is most evident in his appreciation of Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla's *Soṇit Kuwārī*. Kakati could not see that the real source of strength in the play was in its symbolic suggestiveness and tried to judge it with the norms of naturalism. Agarwalla's conscious artistry quite naturally did not fit in with Kakati's critical expectations and he mistook it for some kind of artistic arrogance. So he took a very patronising tone concerning his failure of critical intuition through a plethora of paternal warning :

Our sincere appeal to the author is that like everyone else in our country he should not try to arrogate to himself a big title, and quietly devote himself to literary *pursuit* by forming and enriching his mind through a study of the works of the acknowledged great writers of our country and of the world. In the field of literature there is really nothing new to be done. Literature is merely action and reaction, the voice and the vibration of echo. If only the voice of our forbears receive full reverberation in our mind and heart, we can achieve success.

Kakati could not see that Agarwalla used the legendary material of king Bāna not merely with the ancient poet's desire to depict the symbolic confrontation of *Hari* and *Hara* but to suggest a new poetic theme that in the heart of the true artist the longing for beauty and passion are likely to remain ever unfulfilled. Ushā might find Aniruddha, Bāna might find his formidable challenger, but Chitralkhā would not get final answer to her search :

No, no, you cannot console me,
With images built on past memory;
The ever disquiet human heart
In its boundless quenchless thirst. (*Soṇit Kuwārī*, Act iii sc. i)

Kakati misjudged the intention of the dramatist, though he was perceptive enough to see that as a poetic work the play was admirable. Agarwalla's plays are artifices of imagination, but Kakati appreciated better works which appeared to generate themselves with effortless intensity. Therefore with the growth of modern experimental poetry in the forties and fifties Kakati almost lost interest in criticism of contemporary literature. Quite honestly he refrained from comments and devoted his time and immense scholarship to research in the field of ethnic, religious and cultural heritage of Assam.

Kakati summed up through his life and work the aims and ideals of half a century of literary efforts which started in the 1890's and it is his abiding achievement that he left behind a distinct perspective on literature through his criticism. Critics are not to be judged by any imagined all-inclusive comprehensiveness of their utterances but by the validity of their assessment in terms of the creative efforts of the age. It is the integrity and honesty of vision that gave Kakati his strength. His critical writings are an inspiration to us because he practised his art with a sense of commitment which was wholly literary and he produced a body of writing in the contemplation of which one can acquire not only a sense of style but also the honesty of purpose.

Banikanta Kakati as a connoisseur of Early Assamese Literature

S. N. Sarma

The name of Dr. Banikanta Kakati stands out pre-eminently amongst the elites of the Assamese community as a scholar and literary critic of outstanding brilliance during the first half of this century. He, being a brilliant product of Calcutta University and a finished scholar in literature and linguistics, had the requisite qualifications that go to make a good literary critic. According to Matthew Arnold, a literary critic must have a knowledge of "one great literature besides his own, the more unlike his own the better." Kakati, besides being an M.A. in both literature and language groups of the English course, also possessed an extensive knowledge of Sanskrit literature. He was equally familiar with important landmarks of the neighbouring Bengali literature. Thus he was well-equipped with scholastic attainments to undertake the task of interpreting Assamese literature, both ancient and modern, so as to bring out the significance and beauty inherent in it.

A literary critic is an intermediary between the author and the readers. With his power of discernment, poetic intuition and insight, the critic interprets literature by bringing into focus the significance and beauty which remain unperceived for the average reader or elude him. Kakati as an expounder and interpreter of early Assamese literature had an advantage over his contemporary critics on account of his wide knowledge of Sanskrit and English literatures. It may be noted in this connection that the early Assamese literature, particularly the Vaisnavite literature, is mainly based on the Sanskrit epics and Purāṇas and, therefore, a fair knowledge of Sanskrit classics and devotional literature is a pre-requisite for any assessment or appreciation of early Assamese literature. Kakati's knowledge of English literature in particular, and of European literature in general, helped him considerably to draw parallels between certain literary manifestations of Assam and the West. Thus, we notice that while interpreting Assamese literature he frequently resorted to the comparative method of criticism.

Any assessment of literature that does not take into consideration the social background is bound to be one-sided or imperfect. Although Kakati, in his consideration of early Assamese literature, did not take into account the entire milieu and the moment which produced that literature, yet it must be said to his credit that he did not fail to take cognisance occasionally of the social conditions prevailing at the time of the neo-Vaisnavite movement as well as the spirit of the time that prompted the poets to write for the enjoyment and edification of the masses. The forces that were working for and against the Vaisnavite movement have also been taken note of at appropriate places. But it must be admitted that the social background of early Assamese literature has not received as much attention from Kakati as it deserved. He has not discussed the social background in detail except making occasional references where it is absolutely necessary.

Although literary criticism is not generally considered as a type of creative literature, yet the role of creative insight in exploring and interpreting the latent beauty of the different types of creative productions cannot be underrated. Kakati was not a creative artist in the conventional sense, but his faculty of poetic insight which enabled him to delve deep into the mystery of artistic or poetic creations was beyond question. Exposition and interpretation of some of the modern and early Assamese poetical works by Kakati shed new lustre on their beauty and expression. It was his illuminating exposition or interpretation that helped some of the poets, who did not receive due appreciation in literary circles come to literary limelight.

Kakati's prose style bespeaks his scholarship as well as his literary insight. Although he was a professor of English language and literature, his Assamese prose is largely free from the baneful influence of English idioms and syntax. Unlike some present-day Assamese literary critics who unblushingly allow English idioms and syntax in Assamese garb to vitiate their prose, Kakati was careful enough to maintain the chastity of the Assamese language in his Assamese prose writings. But it must also be said in this connection that his Assamese prose, though forceful and illuminating, is not racy like that of Lakshminath Bezbaroa or Benudhar Sarma. Kakati's literary prose, though not racy, has been, nevertheless, made vibrant and illuminating by apt allusions, similes and metaphorical expressions. Some of his sentences are epigrammatically suggestive and pregnant with thought. His comments have been very frequently made spicy and suggestive by apt quotations from Sanskrit to illustrate his view-points extended from the

Upaniṣads to the classical writings of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. Obviously, Kakati was more fascinated by highly suggestive and honourous Sanskrit vocabulary than by homely Assamese words of everyday life, without being outlandish in expression. It must be said to his credit that he preferred Sanskrit words not for the sake of mere ornamentation, but to make his views and comments more forceful and suggestive and he achieved his desired objective to a considerable extent.

Kakati was not a prolific writer, but his writings made a tremendous impact on contemporary readers because of the authoritative stamp they carried. So far as his writings on early Assamese literature are concerned, the number of critical articles does not exceed a dozen, leaving aside, of course, a few research articles on certain religious practices of India and Assam. It may be mentioned incidentally that his manner of expression of the research articles considerably differs from that of his literary articles. The former, profusely supported by authoritative evidence and ancient texts, is devoid of embellishment and free from the play of imagination and poetic insight. The articles on early Assamese literature, were first published in *Cetanā*, a monthly magazine published in the early twenties by the late Ambikagiri Raichoudhury. These articles were later collected and published in a single volume under the title *Purāṇi Asanīyā Sāhitya* in 1940. These articles were written with the main intention of drawing the attention of the educated people who were cold and indifferent to the beauty and significance of early Assamese literature. It is true that L.N. Bezbaroa and a few other predecessors of Kakati tried to focus attention on the Vaisnavite literature of the medieval period, but their attempts, in spite of being illuminating in patches, failed to arouse enthusiasm of the educated section in respect of our early literature. It was left to Kakati to bring out the beauty, significance and motives underlying the writings of Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva and other Vaisnavite poets.

Purāṇi Asanīyā Sāhitya is a collection of fifteen literary articles on the Vaisnavite literature of Assam that flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the Christian era. The first article dealing with the main contributions of Sankaradeva, the harbinger of the Vaisnavite renaissance in Assam, to Assamese life and society, serves as the introductory background of the literary articles that follow it. The entire Vaisnavite literature should be judged in the context of the ideals and objectives of the Vaisnavite reformers headed by San-

karadeva. Kakati has succinctly underlined the salient objectives and contributions of Sankaradeva and his followers in the introductory chapter. The next article on *Kumara-harṇa* by Ananta Kandali not only points out the originality of the poet in rendering an episode from the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* into metrical Assamese but brings into focus the interactions of the driving forces of the story and the poetic beauty underlying its exposition. The entire story, according to Kakati, moves in a dream world and the imperfect worldly life has not cast its shadow on it. The third article on *Badha-kāvya*, i.e., the Kāvya dealing with the killing of Asuras and Dānavas by the Pāṇ-davas in their exile, brings out the allegorical significance and other salient features of that type of heroic Kāvya which owes its origin to the creative efforts of Rāmasarasvatī of the sixteenth century. Kakati has compared the stories of these works to the medieval romances of Europe and mythological legends of Greece. Of the numerous *Badha-kāvyas*, Kakati has discussed elaborately the story of Hemā Sundarī, better known as *Aśoka-ṛṇa-badha*, and has shown how the stories of the heroic Kāvya intermixed with human sentiments of love, hatred, jealousy, devotion, kindness etc., have not only shown the path of righteousness, but also entertained the unsophisticated listeners and readers with pleasing representation of a variety of emotions, daring acts and savoury stories. The next article, viz., *Parakīyā Bhāva*, discusses the genesis of Vaisnavite devotion which is practised through the medium of sex-love out of wedlock. This type of devotion was never prescribed by the Vaisnavites of Assam but it made a great impact on the adherents of the *Sahajiyā* cult and a section of the Vaisnavites of medieval Bengal. The writer has not failed to draw an analogy between the followers of this devotional cult and the Platonic love practised by some people in medieval Europe. The character of Rādhā in Assamese Vaisnavite literature has undergone a metamorphosis : she has not been depicted as a beloved of Kṛṣṇa as has been done in the *Brahmaivaivarta-purāṇa* or the Vaisnavite literature of Bengal. She is treated as an elder companion of Kṛṣṇa in his boyhood and an ardent devotee of the latter in her mature age. In the next three articles Kakati unfolds the character of the child Kṛṣṇa as depicted by the Vaisnavite writers, particularly Madhavadeva and Sridhara Kandali. They have portrayed Kṛṣṇa as an eternal child having all the traits of a naughty and pampered human child on the one hand and revealing divine grace and splendour on the other. The filial sentiment (*vātsalya rasa*) expressed through the relation of Yaśoda and Kṛṣṇa strikes a sympathetic chord of our heart. Kakati also points out the dexterity of the Vaisnavite poets

in maintaining a balance between the human and the divine aspects of Kṛṣṇa's character. The article on the devotional lyrics, *Bargita*, composed by Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva was originally incorporated by L.N. Bezbaroa in the second edition of his critical work on Sankaradeva. It is an appreciation of the literary merit and the high spiritual tone of the devotional lyrics. The extra-ordinary capacity of Madhavadeva, a life-long celibate, in depicting the childish pranks of Kṛṣṇa with great insight into child psyche has been clearly underlined. Although Kakati has not dealt with all the aspects of the devotional lyrics and has left sufficient scope for further discussion, yet it must be admitted that the salient features and the role they played in the spiritual regeneration of the country have been clearly brought to the purview of the readers. He compared these devotional songs to the 'Noble Numbers' of the English poet, Herrick. Madhavadeva's *magnum opus* is *Nāmaghoṣā* where the devotion-intoxicated soul of the poet finds a superb expression through one thousand verses, half of which are his original composition and the rest drawn from Sanskrit sources. Instead of discussing and probing the theological aspects of the great work, Kakati directs his attention towards unfolding the main channels of thought running through the entire gamut of verses. The poetic personality of Madhavadeva with his humility and passionate devotion, is fully projected in the article on *Nāmaghoṣā*. Kakati's assessment of *Nāmaghoṣā* is not a banal or conventional one; it is a penetrating exposition of the great work and its poet in an inimitable style. In the article on the secular poetry of the Vaisnavite period, Kakati mainly confines his discussion to the writings of two of the contemporaries of Sankaradeva, viz., Dugāvara and Pitāmbara. Although Kakati has called their compositions as *laukika* (secular), in fact, their writings are not wholly secular; they are coloured, no doubt, by secular touches. The assessment of their writings is not an exhaustive one and leaves much scope for a detailed discussion. Nevertheless, the popular nature of their writings devoid of the spiritual urge, so characteristic of the Vaisnavite writings, and their entertainment value as literature, have been clearly suggested. The limitations of the Vaisnavite poetry and the constraints under which the poets had to work are narrated in the next article. The last article on the devotional plays, *Ankīyā Nāṭa*, and their performance discusses the part played by the Vaisnavite plays in diffusing the Vaisnavite ideals and objectives amongst the masses. The technique of presentation and the style of writing of these plays have also been discussed. It cannot be called an exhaustive treatment of the subject, but important salient features have clearly been underlined.

Kakati and the Contemporary Literary Scene

Hirendra Nath Dutta

We may differ with Banikanta Kakati's critical views, but the fact that his scholarship was sound and wide stands. His career has successfully demonstrated the function and importance of a literary intellectual in the cultural life of Assam. His passion for scholarship, his sense of standard and excellence were of a distinguished kind. A void was there for such persons in the literary scene of Assam at that time and he considerably filled up that void. By his twin role as a linguist and as a literary critic, he came to dominate the Assamese literary scene for nearly three decades, and nearly all the leading writers of that time expected to be within his ken. At present, we cannot share the attitude that his words on a piece of literary work are final. The legend that he became in his lifetime is bound to shrink gradually. Despite this fact, the kind of relationship he formed with the writers of his time is noteworthy for the special reason that he encouraged them for some of their qualities without sacrificing his independence of judgement. He carved out for himself the status of a critic who could not be expected to be the follower of any coterie. The period in Assamese literature during which he dominated as a critic is remarkable for the emergence of poets and writers like Ambikagiri Roychaudhury, Raghunath Chaudhury, Jatindranath Dowerah and Jyotiprasad Agarwala. The degree of timely public recognition which is proper for the sustenance and growth of the creative talents of these writers came to them chiefly because Banikanta chose to introduce them to the reading public.

To my mind, the central point of Kakati's ethos was the desire to increase the glory of the culture. This ideal which stimulated most of the Assamese writers of his time can in a way be held as an offshoot of the great literary efflorescence in Bengal beginning in the late nineteenth century and then continuing into the first three decades of the twentieth century. The achievements of the outstanding writers of Bengal suggested to the literary minds of Assam the scope for developing their own language. Sometimes, of course, the Assamese writers fought defensive battles against their Bengali coun-

terparts in order to establish the separate identity of the Assamese language. But, in retrospect, what appears as the most significant aspect of this peculiar relationship is the inspiration which the Assamese writers received to serve their mother tongue following the models of the most distinguished Bengali writers. It was an invigorating influence because it led to the making and growth of modern Assamese literature. In his article on Lakshminath Bezbaruah, he has expressed the following sentiment :

Out of their inability to comprehend the connecting link running through the works of Bezbaruah, many would seek to accuse him of parochialism. But the real method of criticism is to judge the qualities of each work singly from the viewpoint of literature and then to trace the basic principle underlying these works collectively. Everwakening patriotism may surpass its limits on many occasions; but who would call him narrow? Bezbaruah's works are a glowing testimony to his ever-watchful love for his land. ("Bezbaruah" : *Bānī Pratibhā*, p. 75.)

The same attitude has been more attractively elucidated in his article on Ambikagiri Roychaudhury. In an attempt at rebutting the charge of parochialism, which had been occasionally levelled against Ambikagiri from some quarters, Kakati put forward the following defence :

His philosophy is one of 'live and let live'. He would defend all exploited people..... (*Journal of the University of Gauhati*, Vol. X, 1961, p. 129)

Kakati shared Ambikagiri's passion for invigorating the Assamese culture and heritage. He believed that this can be achieved chiefly through the progress of Assamese language and literature :

The national consciousness cannot be retained without the language consciousness. Of the countless national problems of the Assamese people nowadays, the problem of preserving the national consciousness through its language and literature is the foremost one. ("Jātiya Caitanya" : *Bānī Pratibhā*, p. 56)

It must be added here that Kakati's vision of the future Assamese literature is strikingly comprehensive. The following quotation reveals his vision of the future Assamese literature :

Assam is the habitat of various tribes and peoples belonging to different ethnological groups. For achieving the general welfare of the different branches of the Assamese people by uniting them

all and by bringing into focus their activities it is essential for us to devote ourselves to the creation of a fresh philosophy and a new mode of integration. In the many-splendoured life of Assam, we find enough enchanting and thrilling qualities which might inspire bold thinkers. We have in the tribal areas many rituals and many myths concerning Life and Death. If attempts are made to comprehend them with well-regulated sympathy and the spirit of love, then these would enrich the future Assamese literature. ("Bhaviṣyatar Asamīyā Sāhitya", *Bāṇī Pratibhā*, p. 63)

Despite the trace of jargon, it cannot be gainsaid that this observation reflects liberal sentiments, keen foresight and an inspiring proposition for the Assamese writers.

If this observation is studied with care, one is apt to form the impression that Kakati was not complacent about the attainments of the writers of his time. His well-known mocking comments and ironical twists are an indication of his conviction that the sense of high excellence is still far from being pervasive in the contemporary Assamese literary scene. On his part he tried to instil this by attempting to put into currency some critical concepts.

This unwearying attempt to create a sense of standard is his most important service to the literature of his time. To a literary scholar, these concepts would appear familiar and sometimes debatable. Still it is safe to assert that the precise and clear formulation of these concepts (some of which are derived from western literature) has enriched Assamese literature by pointing out to the writers of his time the sense of high excellence. Sampling some such concepts will be of relevance :

1) Literature is the endeavour to tune up one's mind and heart with the people and the society along with the changing situations. In such attempts at adjustment, the new forms which would naturally be evolved are precisely the new voices in literature. ('Bhaviṣyatar Asamīyā Sāhitya' : *Bāṇī Pratibhā*, P. 63.)

2) Briefly speaking, our miseries, aspirations and such objects should not remain confined within the clamour of public slogans; rather, these should be translated into forms and outlines of literature. ('Yuga Sāhitya Āru Samājar Ruprekḥā', Ibid. p. 78.)

3) All true poetry is either the telling picture or the rhythmic vibration of the personal sensibilities of the poet. Yet the success of a

poet is expressed only in the power to convert these personal sensibilities to the ingredient of universal life. ('Kathā Kavita', Ibid. p. 85)

4) Contemporary Assamese literature is in its state of infancy. It cannot be quickly strengthened through creative writings alone. Besides, for creative writings, too, models are necessary. If, in this modern age of internationalism, no indications are available about the trend of ideas of the universal man, then even an original genius cannot attain the degree of growth suitable enough for proper appreciation. ('Mātr', Ibid., p. 112)

The first two sentences of the last passage are also a pointer to another fact. Though Kakati was passionately interested in the development of Assamese literature, he sagaciously strove to avoid the lapses which Matthew Arnold, in his essay "The Study of Poetry", defined as personal and historic criticism.

Despite this, some of his praises would appear to us to be a bit overdone. His thorough-going belief in the romantic theory of imagination and the apathy to the new trends of twentieth century literary criticism have brought forth what would turn out to be old-fashioned views. His comment that Ambikagiri's poem, *Tuni*, from its very beginning, is the vision of the Lord of the Cosmos sounds fatuous. The poem soon annoys and tires a modern reader because of its rhetorical outpourings. Again, Kakati's conclusion that Jatindranath Dowerah is the foremost Assamese poet to "hold forth before the Assamese readers the core of the beauty of ideals nourished by the many-shaded thoughts of the twentieth century" instantly gives rise to the doubt that Kakati might have maintained a callous indifference to the significant writings of the first three decades of the twentieth century. To us now, Jatindranath Dowerah is obviously an epitome of the nineteenth century world of literature.

It is this kind of affinity to the nineteenth century ideal of literature which has distanced Kakati from the modern Assamese critics. The touches of lively explication of the works which he favoured are there in his criticism. Added to this, he had the scholarly ability to illuminate the modern works of literature with analogies drawn from Sanskrit literature. In spite of these rare virtues, his influence has inevitably suffered an eclipse.

But he considerably fulfilled his function as a critic during his time, and on this count alone he would compel our admiration. He

has displayed critical power and critical methods in judging a writer. Kakati's praise for Ambikagiri Roychaudhury because of the latter's ability to combine in his personality the poet as well as the man of action is really sound. The full-blooded humanity of Ambikagiri still continues to inspire the Assamese people. Kakati has praised the poet Raghunath Chaudhury because of the latter's life-long dedication to his vocation as poet. Kakati has pointed out how this single-minded devotion gave rise to a kind of poetry based on really crystallised experiences. Also, Kakati's admiration for Raghunath Chaudhury as a discoverer of the Assamese landscape is quite tenable. To Jyotiprasad Agarwalla, Kakati was quite just. He noted with proper emphasis the extraordinary lyrical gift of Jyotiprasad. His preface to *Soñit Kūwārī* is the high-water mark of Kakati's critical writings. Here he has affectionately cautioned Jyotiprasad against self-infatuation and complacency—traits which most pervasively afflict the Assamese writers. Kakati sincerely expected that the startlingly impressive beginning which Jyotiprasad made as a dramatist should attain its proper consummation. Jyotiprasad was in his teens when he wrote this play, and this alone would justify the cautionary note. Despite this, however, the play is being treated seriously and analysed in a detailed way,—a proof that Kakati could sense in time the emergence of an extraordinary force in Assamese literature. He has stressed those aspects of plot-construction which would appear unconvincing to him. It was for the first time that such a piece of acute textual criticism came to be written in Assamese. Meticulous at some points, the writing displays Kakati's clear insight into the problems of dramaturgy. Kakati has not approved of *Soñit Kūwārī* as a perfect play, but its poetic power has been unambiguously praised. By way of another illustration, let us have a glimpse of Kakati's judgement. This is from a preface to a book of poems by a woman poet, Dharmeswari Devi Baruani :

Here the composer of these poems has not, unlike an average poet, sung a song of pathetic lament by unravelling her heart. Through utmost restraint, she has shown to us that freedom from fear can come from the very source of fear.
("Phular Śarāi". *Bāñī Pratibhā*, p. 109.)

Quite properly, he exhorted the Assamese writers to explore the genius of the Assamese language. He felt that in order to make the literature broad-based the style of the writers should convey the idiom of the common people :

Usually, when the structure of the sentences is simple and the vocabulary idiomatic or homely, then such writings become easy to comprehend and powerfully attractive, because the spell and effectiveness that the typical idiomatic expressions of a language possess are much more potent than those spheres which indicate complexity and scholarship. For this reason our new writers must draw from those simple but touching expressions which women and peasants habitually use. (‘Āmār Natun Sāhitya’, *Bāñi Pratibhā*.)

This argument still retains its relevance in its totality.

Banikanta did not want to play the role of a mentor to the writers of his time. He was mentally engrossed in the creative enterprises of his time without, of course, abandoning a critic's independence of judgement. Through him his contemporaries came to feel the salutary impact of some representative writers who undoubtedly belong to the mainstream of Assamese literary tradition. To become acceptable as a critic without becoming a mere spokesman of the prevalent public taste is the cherished aim of a critic, and Kakati accomplished the task admirably.

Kakati as Prose Writer

U. N. Sarma.

While his contribution in the fields of linguistics, anthropology, comparative mythology and literary criticism has received ample recognition, Kakati's contribution as a creative writer in prose has been unduly neglected. This comparative neglect of his creative work is due to the fact that he did not write in the forms generally recognised as creative—like prose fiction, poetry and drama. Yet his creative use of words in prose has never been matched except in the works of Lakshminath Bezbarua.

The beauty of Kakati's prose has been recognised. It has been termed 'poetical'. It would, however, be unfair to compare him with those prose writers in the English and Indian traditions who allowed the flight of their fancy to clog the easy flow of ideas, or to blur the main lines of argument. Plato has been recognised as a poet par excellence and Bacon's essays show a rare 'poetical' imagination at work. Kakati's works may be appreciated in the light of their creative achievement.

Kakati did not cultivate a 'poetical' style for ornamentation or embellishment. His prose does not show any bravura piece or purple patch. His prose is not oratorical. There is no element of display in it. There is no decadent cultivation of form for its own sake, no profusion or opacity of colouring, no lushness or overloading of luscious imagery. There is no affectation or conscious cultivation of verbal tapestry. Kakati's prose does abound in images like Bacon's; but, the images are not obtrusive. They always serve an integral purpose, expressing what is not otherwise easy to express. His prose is also harmonious. But neither is this harmony obtrusive, standing in the way of understanding. We are never carried away by the rhythm, nor lulled into any inconsequential reverie. The resources of the language are fully used to express an idea. The style is sparkling and clear, like a stream flowing on a bed of pebbles.

Kakati's prose is absolutely free from pedantry though it is, by all means, the prose of a scholar. Even when he is writing on

abstruse subjects he is always able to engage the reader's attention by the beauty of the style. We may not be interested in the scholarly arguments or marshalling of facts on a specialised field. But we linger and listen as the figures in antique mythology come alive in his pages, along with the folk-rituals of long ago in which they take their part as the words roll in their limpid purity.

Kakati had a wide range of diction and he could always adapt his style to the theme or subject he was handling. He was saturated in the Romantic poetry of the great Romantics and the Victorians like Wordsworth and Tennyson. His occasional prose translations of these writers, interspersed in his essays, show a rare sensitivity. He lived in the great creative age of Romantic poetry in Assamese—the age of Ambikagiri Roychaudhury, Raghunath Chaudhury and Jatindranath Duwara. Kakati's contribution to Romantic prose should be appreciated along with their poetry. His creative work is the counterpart, in prose, of their fine work in poetry. Yet, when he wrote about the great Vaishnava poets, he wrote in a precise, concise and objective style to suit the austere beauty of the devotional poetry of an earlier age.

Kakati's creative imagination is seen in his retelling of the stories of Eastern and Western traditions, some of which are embedded in *Pakhilā*, a collection of stories for children. Here, he shows his mastery in the narrative mode. They are the fruit of his exploration of literatures and myths of different lands and times. A creative translator, he shows remarkable originality in rehabilitating the old and the exotic so that they do not appear anachronistically out of place. He dives far and deep and brings to our consciousness ideas from remote areas from Greece to Babylon. His retelling of the story of Midas from Greek Mythology is a little masterpiece of its kind. He often shows great skill as a comic delineator of life in such stories as 'Nārāyaṇrupī Jowāi'. The stories are brought up to date, by infusing into them profound reflections on life that have universal significance. He closes the story 'Nārāyaṇrupī Jowāi' with a piece of topical reflection. The topicality of his adaptation of Aristophanes in 'Mahilār Mahāsabhā' is remarkably fresh and original. These stories are not archaeological reconstructions. Only the names of the characters show that the stories are not of native origin. The moral reflections bear on contemporary or perennial issues. He often builds moral comments into the very texture of style and diction, combining narrative material and moral import in the adroit play of imagery ;

*Bhakt karābhaktai rajāi mad rānak mukhat dhātāle—rāti gacch kharat
kandā khar parā olocā jīmīyā padāthar dare rajār mukhār parā hāladhīyā
pālī bāhar kichuvār kavārin bāgarī parā. Sōṅālī Parāś : Pakhīlā p. 18.)*

[To sharpen his appetite the king poured a mouthful of wine into his mouth—some yellow liquid jewels rolled down from his mouth, through the corners of his lips, like shining materials coming out of a worm crushed at night.]

His adaptation of Aristophanes' *The clouds* is prefixed by a short essay on the eternal conflict between genius and society. While allowing us to enjoy the pungency of Aristophanes' humour, he makes it impossible for us to ignore the greatness of Socrates, by placing him in the proper historical perspective. This shows Kakati's instinctive wisdom and knowledge of the creative forces at work at different moments of history.

Such moral reflections are also characteristic of the miscellaneous essays on different topics of contemporary relevance, which he contributed from time to time on different occasions. Kakati is a master of the literary essay, a form, which has not been practised successfully by many writers before his time or since. His contribution in this respect must include some of his critical essays and prefaces, which, besides throwing light on the creative process at work, also offer moral comments based on his deep experience of life and letters. He often traces the creative work back to its source in the poet's life. The essay on Duwara's *Kathā Kavītā* is a little masterpiece in biographical essay. The essays collected under the title *Sāhitya Āru Prem* trace the success or failure of creative artists belonging to the widely different traditions to their individual attitudes to the passion of love. The essay 'Kabir Ahoitukī Prēti', in the same volume, contains a fine piece of biographical reconstruction from one particular angle, of a great medieval writer. These essays are marked by lucidity and elegance.

Kakati's essay on *Phular Śmī*, a collection of poems by Dharmeswari Devī Baruanī is a fine example of his mature work. The critical insight it displays is remarkable. Here he studies the interplay of life and literature, drawing a fine distinction between the individual that suffers and the poet that creates, with remarkable assurance. His appreciation of the poet's achievement is framed within a superstructure of moral commentary, in matchless prose.

Moral reflections of this type are characteristic of his later writings and occasional pieces. By now, Kakati seems to have felt that the great age of creation was over, and a sort of moral decadence had already set in. In the confused din of slogan mongering he did not find anything constructive. His deep anxiety was to see that the torch of culture was kept burning. He had hoped that the hard-earned freedom of the country would act as a liberating force in the cultural horizon. Most of his late writings, however, express a sense of disillusion. Culture, as he thought, was about to be extinguished and the raucous voice of political discontent appeared to have drowned the voice of clear idealism. He incited the youth to stick to the path of silent work eschewing ostentation and cheap display.

These delicate topics are treated by him in a style which retains the impress of his genius. His style is still vigorous and flexible, his mastery of irony and sarcasm still a potent instrument of moral criticism and reflection :

Kono aloukik ghatanāi āmār bhāṣā āra sāhityar bhītaredi jātiya istanār udbodhan nahare. Asam Sāhitya Sabhār pine cowā, deś svādhīn hāl, sāhitya dharāśayī hāl. Kāmrūp Anusandhān Samitir pine cowā; echaṭā katā-kāṭhat nāmṇō āki thowā āche, jēn kabarkhānār duoār mukhat ārā marā māmuhar nām (‘Jātiya Caitanya’ : *Bāṇī Pratibhā*, p. 57).

(No miraculous happening will rouse our national consciousness through our language and literature. Look at Asam Sāhitya Sabhā, the country has been liberated, but literature is in a tottering condition. Look at Kāmrūp Anusandhān Samiti, the name is only scribbled on a black slate of wood—as though, it is the name of a dead man inscribed at the gate of a graveyard.)

The style is searchingly incisive. The last line might come from the pen of a modernist poet with a flair for uncompromising realism. This style shows that Kakati was capable of writing good satire with the power to use his language to devastating effect.

Kakati had an innate sense of structure, which is seen not only in the construction of the paragraph, but also in the construction of the essay as a whole. His style is aphoristic like Bacon’s and usually free from elaborate periods. The sentences follow each other as separate entities, but they are bound by countless links of emotion and idea. In his reflective essays in particular, he has a spoken voice, as unmistakably individual as Bacon’s :

"Virtue is like precious odour, most fragrant when incensed or crushed." (Bacon : Of Adversity).

Sāgar manthanat amṛt āra garat duyo oldichit. D-vāsakale amṛt bilāi lalē. Kintu bhavigyate sarṁsārāt akalyāṇ haba bhābī mahōyogī Mahādeva sakala-khīnī garat gīlī khāi cira-kālāoi nīlakanṭha hoi thōkil. Sarṁsārāt ādhihyādhīt mānuṣar jīvanō sāgarar dare pramāṇitā hoy. Manat bih āru amṛt duyoṛo uday hoy. Manar jāl lokasamājat bistar nēkati nijei jīma kari amṛtibhāg naradevatār sevāt lagāba pavāṇot-he jīvanar sārthakatā bijāy. (Phular Śarāi : Bānī Pratibhā, p. 106)

[When the ocean was churned both nectar and poison came out. The gods took away the nectar. But the great Yogi Mahādeva, concerned at the possible harm to the world in future, quaffed the poison and remained, forever, the 'Blue-necked One' (*nīlakanṭha*). Under the stress of the sufferings incident to the world, human life, too, is churned like the ocean. The anguish of the mind should not be spread to the human society at large, but should be endured and the share of the nectar should be offered to the service of the god in man. That shows the success of life.]

There is hardly another piece of prose in the language which has measured the depth of human life as deeply. The mythological configuration is maintained throughout to give a structural basis to the delineation of emotion with an immediacy of effect.

Kakati's handling of the incongruous as a source of laughter is masterly. This is how he renders the pathetic condition of the monthlies in his time :

Ei dukhanat bāje ānbor sūmayik patrikāk nejāl tarār lagat rijāba pāri. Kābor kawal ebār olāyoī kūnyat māt jāy. Āwāhan, Surabhi adi purāṇi patrikāi etiyā Helis nejāl tarār anusaraṇ kariche ; keibāmāhar antat-he ebār sāhityar surajagatat bhūmukī māre.

[Excepting these two, the other periodicals can be compared to the comet. Some of them appear only once and then vanish into nothingness. The old magazines like *Āwāhan* and *Surabhi* have now followed the course of Halley's comet. They occasionally appear in the solar system of literature after the lapse of several months.]

His comments in such passages as this are shot with iridescent humour which he wields as a fine instrument for moral illumination. His mastery of irony and sarcasm is unsurpassed.

Kakati was a conscious stylist, always choosing his words with care, though this consciousness was not allowed to destroy the spontaneity of utterance. He had great respect for the richness of resources of the Assamese language which he saw embodied in the inimitable style of Lakshminath Bezbarua which he praised wholeheartedly in a style which itself realises the salient features of the style he was praising :

Nibhāj Asamīyā gharucā śabda, kintu upayukta jhāt, upayukta bhārar bāhan hicābe byavahār karile tār je ki madhur jhankār, ki prakāśikā śakti, ki dhvani tār udāharan Burhī Āir Sādhū, Kakādeutā āru Nātilarā. (Bezbarua : Bāñi Pratibhā, p. 75)

[Pure, Assamese homely words—but when used in the proper place, as the vehicle of suitable ideas, they release a beautifully suggestive reverberation, and possess a power of expressiveness and *dhvani* of which *Burhī Āir Sādhū* and *Kakādeutā āru Nātilarā*, are examples.]

Kakati expressed the opinion that one should cultivate the style of Bezbarua if one had to write a simple, elegant and suggestive prose and that much harm might be done to the language if one were to write in Assamese without following the pattern set by Bezbarua. It is easy to see what models were followed by Kakati, in his endeavour in prose. He praises Bezbarua's handling of easy, colloquial, homely words which take on a rich aura of suggestion in the hands of the great master. The same may be said of Kakati also. The behaviour of Assamese words whether of native or alien origin was his life-long study. It is not surprising that he was able to master the subtle nuances of their meanings and suggestions. He elicits fine music from the collocation of words taken from varied, often disparate sources both learned and colloquial. The interplay of sound and meaning, the echoes and counter-echoes made possible by such collocations in such sentences as the following show a mastery of diction hardly excelled anywhere in Indian prose literature :

Kintu Himālayar nibhṛta śringgar oparat stūpikṛta hoi thakā ek ananta tuharā. Sṛjē galī goi bhoirāmat nānā nad-nadī swarūpe acatirṇa hawār dṛ., ei tinio dhārā. Ei mūl kāray hoiche Mādhvadevār rājanīyī bhaktir gabhīr ābeg. (Nāmglosī : Purāṇi Asamīyā Sāhitya, p. 83)

[But just as the infinite mass of snow heaped on the distant and unapproachable peak of the Himalayas melts and appears in the form of various rivers, in the same way, the original source of these three streams also is the deep surge of emotion of the *rasamayī bhakti* of Mādhavdeva.]

Tumi *kāvya birāṭ bhāvar khalakani eṭir parā olāiche, iyār sakalo chedatei āścaryya tanmayatār bhāv; śilar oparedi taḍit gatit chitiki parā jalaprapātar larangga-bhangār dare daśākṣarī cuṭi padbore anubhūtir tībratā bicitra soundaryyamayī bhāṣāre prakāś kariche. (Tumi : Bānī Pratibhā, p. 99)*

[The *Kāvya*, *Tumi*, has originated in the upsurge of a huge idea; in all its parts, there plays a mysterious sense of wonder. The ten-syllabled short verses have expressed the intensity of feeling in a strangely variegated and beautiful language as the breaking of ripples of the waterfall that splashes with lightning speed over the rocks.]

Kakati showed his conscious artistry in prose very early in his life in his classic essay of critical exposition 'Sāhityat Karuṇ Ras' published in 1916. Though not entirely free from youthful exuberance, it already shows a style which is simple, clear and elegant, but loaded with a rich suggestiveness of expression. Ideas are balanced properly: full use has been made of the permissible sources of rhetorical manipulations. His intimate knowledge of Sanskrit literature has its effect on his writing and the beauty of the poetic diction of the early masters has passed into his style. Here he successfully experiments in the combination of learned and colloquial words which enriches a prose marked by a high degree of suggestiveness and euphony, the hall-mark of his style.

His *Puraṇi Asamīyā Sāhitya* (1940) shows great maturity in thought and expression. The prose is disciplined and has an austere beauty in keeping with the restrained and elevated style of old Assamese poetry. Here Kakati opens up vistas hitherto neglected, and he guides us through the aisles and colonnades of the great edifice of Vaishnava literature. His prose here achieves a rare consciousness of expression. The imagery is sparingly used, but, with consummate effect :

Eṭor kāraṇe Bargūtorar imān bistṛti ghaṭichil je marubhūmit uṭe pānir gondh loi jalāśay bicarār dare tṛṣita mānavsakaleo

*Bargitā dāroni jēnādhronik - lokya kati gura dujandā nantat
spāthi kōhāL*
(*Bargit : Pāragi Asmitā Sahitya* P. 75)

[For these reasons, the Bargits spread so widely that just as the camel was in search of the source of water in the vastness of the desert, constantly attempting to feel its presence with the nose, in the same way, the people impelled by spiritual thirst, followed the echoes and reverberations of the Bargits and arrived at the place where the two Gurus were staying.]

Here the imagery is not used for ornament but it serves an integral purpose of memorable expression. The integral use of the imagery is superbly made, one set of experience being illuminated and realised with the help of another set of experience.

In his treatment of the great Romantic poets of his time his prose glows with emotional intensity. The outline is still clear, but there is a faint exuberance of colouring, and spontaneous adroitness of rhythm. The prose here shows a richness of suggestion, often evoked by the rhythm, not found in earlier practitioners of the form. A new tone has entered into the creative prose of Assamese literature :

*Sakalo prakṛta kabitāi kabir byaktigata amubhūtir bhāṣāmay
citra ha chandamay spandan.* (*Kathā Kavītā : Bānī Pratibhā*,
p. 85)

[All true poetry is a picture in words or a rhythmic reverberation of the poets' personal emotion.]

Though Kakati's output in creative prose has been small, his contribution still has an immense value. He wrote at a time of great intellectual ferment when new ideas were struggling for expression. He was among the first and perhaps the greatest among the prose writers to have taken up the challenge of the times. He had the genius to probe deeply the creative problems of his time. His critical efforts are the result of that urgency. Kakati's writings pulsate with a passionate interest in the maintenance of his country's culture. This and a deep love for what was best in the literature of any period or clime have been the source of his strength as a prose writer—and his uncompromising search for excellence. By whatever standards we might judge his writings, Kakati remains one of the greatest prose writers of this century.

Kakati the Sociologist : His Studies in the Magico-Religious Beliefs and Practices of Assam.

Sivanath Barman

History lays her powerful hands even upon the genius. He may be inscrutable in many of his ways, but like any other man, he, too, is a product of his own age, an outstanding product—its 'quintessence' so to speak—but a product nevertheless. He may pry beyond the rim of the world that binds him, and be overwhelmed by the vast realm of the unknown that looms so large; but History—that inexorable goddess—muffles his voice. As Eliot said in his 'Little Gidding', he has no speech, when living, for communicating his experiences to his fellowmen; he is understood only after his death. To cite an example from science: Galileo got glimpses of a number of ideas that constitute what is now termed as the 'Newtonian' physics. But anchored in historical time and space, he could find no proper speech by which to express them. It was only his successors who removed the haze that adumbrated his ideas and brought them to light.

Kakati, likewise, sensed intuitively certain key ideas about the sociological studies of religion in Assam; but born in an environment where feudalism held its full sway over the minds of the people, he could not spell them out distinctly. He was thus a precursor—the Galileo in the field of sociology in Assam. Be it recalled that it was Kakati who, for the first time, tried to analyse "the magico-religious beliefs and practices of Assam *in the light of the comparative method of modern sociological studies*".¹ Before him, there had been only disjointed speculations about these beliefs and practices. Kakati was the first to feel the need of a method to explain them.

Sociology, though often regarded in our country as an exclusive branch of the humanities, can very well claim a place in the sciences also. True, it lacks scope for the experimental verification of its

1. B. Kakati, *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā* (M. G. K.), Gauhati, 1961 pp. v-vi (italics mine).

various hypotheses; but it is science in the sense that it attempts to arrive at a strictly causal explanation of the diverse courses of society without having any recourse to other-worldly considerations. Obviously, it is a peculiar branch of science, dealing with a vast network of happenings in which the investigator himself is directly entangled. Unlike the natural sciences, its subject matter is neither some lifeless objects, nor some animals, but men—real living men. The sociologist, so to say, is a part of his own study—a fact that brings with it every danger of his being an easy prey to subjectivism.

What is true of sociology in general is also true of sociology of religion in particular. Max Weber once remarked that whatever his personal attitude towards religion might be, the sociologist, while studying religious phenomena, should always remain "religiously unmusical", if he wants to raise his study to the objective stature of science. But religiosity being one of the most intimate of human feelings, this poses a very difficult task for him. This is more particularly so in Assam, where the feudal mode of thinking i.e. giving every idea a religious garb—still governs the minds not only of common men, but even of the intelligentsia.

It is a real wonder that decades ago, Kakati, a devoutly religious man, could, to a great extent, 'remain 'religiously unmusical' in his study of religion. In analysing the magico-religious beliefs and customs that are often Bacchic-Aphrodisiac in nature, he showed neither Tantric exaltation nor Vaishnavite detestation—a characteristic so conspicuously absent in the writings of even the latter-day students in this field. Engels wrote long ago that "all understanding of primitive conditions remain impossible so long as we regard them through brothel spectacles."² Kakati viewed the aboriginal beliefs and practices not through 'brothel spectacles', but as social phenomena to be investigated with the eyes of a scientist.

Sociologically speaking, however, this objective attitude towards religious questions mirrored the growth of the incipient bourgeoisie in Assam. The advent of the mercenary-minded British and the accompanying wind of change, which, in the late nineteenth century, became tremendous, enough to rock the very foundation of the traditional Indian society, had its impact, however weak, in the geographical

2. F. Engels. *The Origin of Family, Private Property and State*, Moscow, 1955, p. 37.

cally secluded state of Assam also. It created, as in other parts of the country, a small milieu of English-educated urban middle class who learnt to look at the traditional prejudices with a certain amount of detachment and could, if necessary, reject them. Kakati, though not the first, was definitely one of the foremost members of that milieu.

So much for the *quality* of Kakati as a sociologist. Now, his *achievements*.

The major achievement of Kakati as a sociologist, I think, is, two-fold :—a) his finding that the culture of Assam as a whole consists more of Aryanised elements than Aryan proper ; b) his scientific attempts to discover reality from the myths.

Let me elaborate the points.

Aryan or Aryanised :

"The progressive Sanskritisation of the various pre-Aryan or non-Aryan peoples, their culture, their outlook and their ways of life", writes Dr. S.K. Chatterjee, "forms the keynote of India through the ages." 3 To any impartial observer, it is obvious that there are distinctly two trends—Aryan and extra-Aryan—that constitute Indian culture. But most scholars of Indology (with a few exceptions like Chatterjee, while studying the culture and civilisation of India, like to put on blinkers so that they can see only what is Aryan ; prejudiced by class outlook (or rather caste outlook), they often tend to create, in the manner of the fascists, the myth of a monolithic Aryan culture where anything extra-Aryan is either ignored or mysteriously explained away ; tribal beliefs and customs are often scoffed at without any realisation that it is these 'dirty swamps' on which the magnanimity of Indian culture is ultimately based.

It is amazing to find Kakati swim against this traditional current. It is not that he could free himself entirely from the Aryan bias ; but a true researcher and a strong believer in cultural synthesis that he was, his bias did not prevent him from seeing what is real from what is only apparent. That is why, in his studies in the culture and civilisation of ancient Assam, he did not try to round off the inner contradictions, following the trail of his traditional masters ; rather he concentrated on the degree of Aryanisation of the non-Aryan religious beliefs and customs in the region. In this connection,

3. S. K. Chatterjee, *Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti*, Asiatic Society Publication, 1974, p. 5.

the sub-title of his *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā* is worthy of note, which is—"Studies in the fusion of Aryan and primitive beliefs in Assam."

Kakati's erudition as a linguist helped him to explore the essentially non-Aryan character of Assamese culture. His etymological derivations are very interesting. Take, for example, the word *āśām*. While the 'Aryan' view is that it is derived from the Sanskrit *na sa-ma*, meaning "unparalleled", Kakati derived the word from Tai $\sqrt{chām}$, 'to be defeated', with the Aryan Assamese privative prefix *ā-*, the whole formation *āśām*, meaning 'undefeated', 'victorious', thus being a hybrid equivalent to the word *thāi* (Tāi), meaning 'free'.⁴ Similarly, the word *prāg-jyotiṣpura*: this word is generally believed to be a combination of three Sanskrit morphemes—*prāk*, *jyotiṣ* and *pura*, meaning 'city of Eastern Astrology'.⁵ But Kakati's formation of the word is: "The topographical features of *Prāg-jyotiṣa* as described in the *Purāṇas* would correspond to a formation like *pagar-juh(jo)-tic* (*c'=ch*),=(a region of) extensive high hills. Thus *Prāg-jyotiṣa* may be a Sanskritisation of a non-Aryan formation."⁶ The same may be said about words like *Kāmarūpa* and *Kāmākhyā*. Backed by the Puranic myth that Kāma, the Indian Cupid, who had been destroyed by the fire emitted from Siva's wrathful eyes, regained his form (*rūpa*) in this region, the 'Aryan' pundits believe the word *Kāmarūpa* to be a combination of two Sanskrit morphemes—*Kāma* and *rūpa*.⁷ But in his *Puraṇi Kāmrūpar Dharmar Dhārā* ('Trends of Religion in Ancient Kamarupa', a book written in Assamese), Kakati inferred that this word might actually be a derivative of the word 'Kāmaru', a tribal god of Assam.⁸ About the word *Kāmākhyā*, the *Kālikā Purāṇa* says that the goddess was so named, as she came to Mahāgiri to gratify her sensual desire (*kāma*) with the god Śiva.⁹ But Kakati presumed

4. M.G.K. p. 2, vide also, 'The Name Assam-Ahom.' S.K. Chatterjee. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XXII, 1956, No. 2.

5. Vide Edward Gait, *The History of Assam*, Gauhati.

6. M.G.K. pp. 5-6.

7. "Śambhunetrāgni nirdagdhaḥ kāmah Śambhuranugrahāt
Tatra rūpaṁ yataḥ prāpa kamarūpaṁ tato bahhavat'.

—*Kālikā Purāṇa* 51/67.

8. *Puraṇi Kāmrūpar Dharmar Dhārā*. (P.K.D.D.), Gauhati, 1955, p. 10

9. "Kāmārthamāgāt yasmānmayā sārddham Mahāgiraḥ.
Kāmākhyā procyate devī nīlakūṭe rahogatā.

that the name of this so-called Aryan goddess might be a Sanskritised form of that of a tribal goddess—Kāmā.¹⁰

Eventually, Kakati was the first man to explode the long prevalent myth of Aryan predominance in Assam by quoting from ancient Hindu scriptures some irrefutable evidence that Assam, being somewhat of an inaccessible, hilly region, had remained, up to the Moghul times, outside the fold of Aryan civilisation. He even devoted the first two chapters of his book *Purāṇi Kāmrupar Dharmar Dhārā* to the illustration of the fact that “starting from Ramarajya up to the age of the Moghuls, Assam was never included in any one of the Aryan empires.”¹¹

Rummaging through the library of Hindu scriptures, Kakati learnt how Assam had always been regarded by the Aryans as a place “inaccessible by hill fortification, arm fortification, waters, fires and winds.”¹² From *Kālikā Purāṇa* and *Yoginī Tantra* he came to know that its original inhabitants were composed not of Aryans, but of certain tribes called *Kirātas* “with shaven heads and yellow skin.”¹³

“When Hinduism spread extensively over every race, the beliefs and customs of the non-Hindu tribes were included therein. The religion that arose out of the fusion of Aryans and the non-Aryans was termed *Kairātaja* by the author of the *Yoginī Tantra*.”¹⁴

This and such other statements show his understanding of the nature of Hinduism in Assam.

By creating certain myths that brought the tribal gods in kinship with certain gods of the Hindu pantheon, the Brahmin immigrants in the tribal lands helped the process of fusion of the non-Aryan elements in a general Hindu society. But as the tribal people did not give up their long-accustomed modes of life immedia-

10. P.K.D.D. p. 23

For a different ‘tribal’ version of the etymology of the words *Kāmarūpa* and *Kāmākhyā*, vide Bishnu Prasad Rabha, ‘Janajātīya Sanskritit Siva’ (‘Siva in Tribal Culture’, an article in Assamese), *Dainik Asam*, Puja No. Śaka, 1888.

11. P.K.D.D. (translated from Assamese)

12. M.G.K. p. 5.

13. Ibid. p. 8.

14. P.K.D.D. (translated), p. 11.

tely, the orgiastic rites and other customs, characteristic of fertility cults, remained as they were, with the only difference that they were now given a Hindu colouring. This is what the orthodox Hindu writers tend to describe as "the degradation of the Aryan religions due to the contact of the non-Aryan races."¹⁵

But a reflection on the dialectical relationship between the material activity of men and his spiritual activity like religion, philosophy etc shows that it was the primitiveness of the material mode of production and its relative stagnation that caused the non-Aryan tribes to detribalise themselves only partially. Moreover, as new batches of hill tribes came from time to time to settle down in the fertile plains, where the Brahmin immigrants too settled, the process of Hinduisation was never complete. It was owing to this incomplete process of Hinduisation (or detribalisation, whatever one chooses to call it) that the pre-Vaishnavite religions of Assam, as in many other parts of India, became sanctuaries of innumerable rites and practices that are so nauseating to the 'civilised Aryan.'

Kakati could guess all this, but vestiges of traditional mode of thinking never left him. He never seemed to realise that religious beliefs and practices are never formed *de novo*; that, to whatever height they may appear to soar above the earthly life of mud and filth, they have never any independent realm of existence; that they are only celestialised forms of material reality and hence can be understood only by analysing the socio-economic structure that constitutes that reality. His inability to grasp fully the significance of material (and hence scientific) outlook is reflected in passages like this :

"The existence of society was threatened. Moreover, society itself was moth-eaten from within, and without any sustaining vitality from any external source. The land was infected with itinerant teachers of the Vāmāchāra Tantric schools with their insistence on the philosophy of sex and palate. Amongst religious rites, the most spectacular were bloody sacrifices to gods and goddesses amidst deafening noises of drums and cymbals, night vigil and virgin worship, and the lewd dances of the temple women.

.....To the exhausted kingdom without inner vitality and external coercion, he (Sankaradeva) threw out a gospel of absolute surrender to One, the *Eka-Śaraṇa* religion."¹⁶

15. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1 Allen and Unwin, 1955, p. 118.
16. M.G.K. p. 80.

Again, "The moral forces of society were fully exhausted when Sankara commenced his mission. It was an uphill task for him to stand against such an order of things. But the Kayastha youth, with the supreme equanimity of a philosopher, the boldness of a martyr and the far-sightedness of a prophet, stood up alone, unaided, every moment subjected to persecution,—to remedy the social evils which, in the name of religion, were demoralising the people."¹⁷

Plethoric in traditional thinking, these two passages further indicate how much unaware Kakati was of the historicity of religious ethic, of the complex web of socio-economic forces, of the intricate cause-effect relationship amongst them etc—the knowledge of all of which is so essential for a social scientist. His study of Sankaradeva was wholly asociological. He wrote his book on Sankaradeva in a strongly eulogistic vein, thereby missing a number of vital questions. That people's attraction from polytheistic beliefs to *Eka-Śaṇa* might be an ideological manifestation of a society of heterogeneous isolated groups heading towards a general one, that the Bhakti piety might, among other things, be an idealisation of the mundane desire of the feudal middle class to protect their cattle that are so essential for the higher forms of agriculture (in contrast to hoe culture), that its effect was to strengthen the feudal bond between the peasant and the land-owner and thus to stabilise the feudal society, that the non-inclusion of women in the Bhakti fold was the result of the degradation of the economic status of women in higher forms of feudalism,—these and other sociological questions seemed never to have occurred to him, while he was writing the book. Further, his concept of the emergence of great men in society was, bluntly speaking, too superficial. He seemed to regard Sankaradeva not as a historical agent of the tribal-feudal Assamese society pregnant with a newer and higher form of it, but rather as a super-historical agent—as God-incarnate who descends from heaven 'to uphold the righteous and to destroy the wicked' (*abhyutthānāya sādhanām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām*), as stated in the Gita.

Myth and Reality :

With his age-old experience of a petrified social order,—an order resulting unmistakably from the stagnancy of the whole

17. *Sankaradeva* (Quoted from a typed manuscript).

economic process,—the average Indian was more prone to creating myth out of reality than vice versa. His sense of history evaporated almost as quickly as it formed resulting in the burial of reality in the debris of mythical creations. This continued up to the end of the nineteenth century when the ever-changing capitalistic forms of relationship sprang up and threatened to destroy the old stagnant economy.

Kakati, a product of the still nascent bourgeoisie of Assam, made a serious effort to remove the debris that gathered in Assam history and to discover therefrom the actual relations of life. He engaged himself in a meticulous study of the ancient Hindu scriptures like the *Kālikā Purāṇa* and the *Yoginī Tantra*, and for the first time tried to delve into the earthly core of the myths that are narrated in them. In his *Visnuite Myths and Legends*, he rightly pointed out that "the constituent elements of Indian legends can be traced back to the following sources—(a) Indo-European, (b) Indo-Aryan, (c) Extra-Aryan which includes aboriginal and tribal beliefs," 18

Kakati, it appears, could not fully grasp how the manner of worship and the type of deity in a given society are determined by the mode of securing the material subsistence, but he came very near to the understanding that gods and goddesses are not entirely free from the influences of the material situations of life. From Briffault he learnt how Mother worship prevails in societies that are predominantly matriarchal, and he applied it with success in his investigation on the Mother Goddess of Kāmākhyā : "The Mother cult of Kāmākhyā must have belonged to certain matriarchal tribes like the Khāsis and the Gāros. To win over their allegiance and support, and facilitate the propagation of Aryan ideas and customs, royal patronage was extended to this local cult of Kāmākhyā. The Mother Goddess of Kāmākhyā could be very easily brought into alignment with other forms of Mother Goddesses like Durgā, Kālī etc, which had already been recognised and adored in the *Mahābhārata* and the earlier *Purāṇas*." 19

In spite of this understanding Kakati did not lay any stress upon the nature and the form of the socio-economic organisation in which the Mother is likely to be the head of the group. He investigated only superficially into the nature of the sexual orgies so in-

18. B. Kakati, *Visnuite Myths and Legends* : (V.M.L.), Gauhati, 1952, p. 4.

19. M.G.K., p. 16

timately connected with Mother worship, and their relation to agriculture. It seems he could not fully comprehend the significance of agricultural magic.²⁰ On the other hand, a comparative mythologist that he was, he believed, sometimes uncritically, in the so-called 'Diffusionist theory of Culture' ("...the cult of the Mother Goddess was introduced by Aryans who seem to have adopted it from the Babylonians" etc.²¹).

For all these reasons, Kakati failed to see the material basis of the Tantric beliefs and practices that are so well explained by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya in his *Lokāyata*.²² Elsewhere, however, while explaining the significance of Rāsa dance, he wrote, "It was a licence festival generally associated with the agricultural rites of the primitive people".²³ Following Max Müller's suggestion that "comparative mythologists should recover the original meaning of the name of a god in order to explain its original significance,"²⁴ he even connected the word *Rādhiā* with agricultural functions.²⁵ At one place, he quotes from Briffault :

"Festivals of promiscuity or of the general relaxation of sexual moral codes reminiscent of such promiscuity have survived in most countries in relation to what were originally agricultural magic to evoke the magical powers of fertility."²⁶

His conjectures were true. But as he never carried his points to a deeper level, his studies on the relation between the social structure of the primitive peoples and their corresponding beliefs remained incomplete.

Kakati's ideas about totemism were also clouded in extreme vagueness. He wrote about the fish and tortoise deities etc, but nowhere did he mention any probability of linking them up with the

20. It may be noted that there is not a single mention of Frazer either in *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhya* or in the *Purāṇi Kāmārūpa Dharmar Dhārā*. Quotations from Frazer are found only in two articles of *Visnuite Myths and Legends*, and those too are not in connection with the theory of magic. It is curious why the famous chapters on magic in *The Golden Bough* failed to draw his attention.

21. M.G.K., p. 37.

22. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata : A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism*. People's Publishing House, 1959, pp. 269-353 etc.

23. V.M.L., p. 75.

24. Ibid. p. 4.

25. Ibid. p. 69.

26. Ibid. p. 77.

totemistic beliefs of the tribal societies. The totem, as we know, is a particular object, animate or inanimate (generally an animal or a tree) by which the members of every clan identify themselves. It is a symbol of unity of the tribe. So long as the tribal community is at a very low level of production, the totem expresses a social coherence and equality in which the community is supreme over each of its individual members. The function of the totem is, thus, initially magical rather than religious. But when the improvement of the techniques of production enables the tribe to produce a surplus, the social equality becomes a thing of the past, and the totem—now a symbol of locality—is deified and worshipped; it becomes an anthropomorphic god.

But such ideas did not flash across the mind of Kakati while he was writing about the Matsya, Kurma and Varāha incarnations of the Hindu mythology.

The same may be said of his ideas about head-hunting and human sacrifices. Human sacrifices have a number of magical reasons, the chief of which is intimately connected with agriculture. The primitive people, with their peculiar psychology, drew a parallel between the growth and decay of the crop with those of human life, and assumed, by the principle of sympathetic magic, that for better crop to grow, some vigorous male must be sacrificed before sowing. Head-hunting, on the other hand, is connected with certain animistic beliefs, i.e. with the theory of indestructibility and transferability of soul-matter. In *Purāṇi Kāmārūpaṛ Dharmar Dhārā* Kakati devoted one complete chapter to the custom of human sacrifice and head-hunting in Assam, but did not apply any of these ideas therein.

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Thus, as an investigator into the primitive beliefs and practices, Kakati had his limits. But as we said earlier, the limitation was not *his*; it was a limitation imposed on him by the nature of the society he lived in. Like all great men, he, too was a child of his age and could not overstep the limit his times drew up for him.

Despite all the limitations no one in Assam has yet been able to supersede his achievement in this field. Kakati's studies in the magico-religious beliefs and practices of Assam, like those of Haraprasad Sastri, Rajendralal Mitra and others in Bengal, will surely retain their unique historical significance for all time to come.

PART III

Short Reviews of Kakati's Works



The Mother Goddess Kamakhya

The Mother Goddess Kamakhya by Banikanta Kakati sets forth, in spite of its brief compass, a mass of important materials elucidating the history of Saiva and Tantric cults in Assam. Saivism has a long history, and was the prevailing cult in diverse periods of Indian religious evolution. It has manifold aspects as a popular religion and as a school of philosophical and mystic thought with a vast literature of its own. As a popular religion it evoked devotional and spiritual fervour especially in South India where it represented a sort of mass movement under the leadership of the Tamil Saiva Saint. Elsewhere it fostered an organised corporate life in monastic foundations and educational establishments in areas as far apart as Gwalior and Konkan, and Rewa and Mysore. At certain epochs of Indian religious life it has appeared in the vanguard of opposition to the non-Brahmanical schools of thought; and the prolonged Saiva-Jaina controversy is, in fact, a little known but important chapter in the religious history of India. Above all, Saivism has profoundly influenced Indian temple architecture culminating in the classic examples at Ellora and Elephanta, among other instances too numerous to mention.

But as a popular religion Saivism in its later phases, partly at least, degenerated into a congeries of abnormal cults and religious aberrations; and it appears that in no part of India was this more prominent than in Assam where, as in certain other regions, it became affiliated to Tantric cults of non-Aryan or tribal origins. It is this aspect of Saivism *cum* Tantricism that Dr. Kakati has studied with special reference to Assam with a thoroughness which does credit to his scholarship and critical judgement. Dr Kakati's book is a valuable contribution to the study of Tantricism in Assam and the gradual transition to the new discipline of the Vaishnava teachers. It is to be hoped that younger scholars will emulate his example and give us a systematic study of the various tribal or non-Aryan cults which are known to have existed in different parts of Assam.*

—K. K. Handiqui

* Published in *The Assam Tribune*, Sunday, 9th May, 1948. (Reproduction permitted by the late K. K. Handiqui, *vide* his note to the editors, dated 5. 5. 76).

Visnuite Myths and Legends (1)

Professor Banikanta Kakati's *Visnuite Myths and Legends : In Folklore Setting* came out as a posthumous publication, just after his death. This is his second work in the field of Indology, the other being *The Mother Goddess Kamakhya* (1948). *Visnuite Myths and Legends* is a book difficult to review, chiefly because, though small in size (140 pages), it incorporates considerable material of diverse character and the author's mind ranges over not only the entire Vedic and Puranic lore but also Indo-European mythology and other comparative material having a bearing on the subject handled. Kakati had not the time and the patience to take up a theme and work it out at a leisurely pace into a full-length work : his *forte* was the presentation of data in a few pages in order to prove a hypothesis which he felt was plausible. In a way, he was a scholar's scholar.

Kakati's primary concern was to trace the origin of the avatāras of Viṣṇu and analyze the myths and legends associated with him. One of the usual exercises of Indian scholars is to trace some god or goddess to the Vedas and thus prove the prestige or authenticity of a certain cult. They hardly rise above their material and look at the evidence dispassionately. Exceptions are there; for instance, Professor D.C. Sircar (vide *The Śāktapīṭhas*). The attempt to trace Indian gods and goddesses to the Vedas or sometimes to extra-Indian sources was first set in motion by Western scholars like Macdonell and Barth. A recent book in this tradition is Dr. Sukumari Bhattacharya's *Indian Theogony*, the chief merit of which is that it is more well-documented than such earlier works.

Excavations in the Middle East, including those at Harappa and Mahenjo Daro, and knowledge of Egyptian and Babylonian or even Hitrite lore have filled in certain gaps in the history and geography of earlier Indian beliefs and it has been possible now to link up matter lying geographically scattered in a work like E.O. James' *Prehistoric Religion* (1957).

Kakati's indebtedness to works like Macdonell's *Vedic India* or Barth's *Religions of India* is obvious, but he quotes them only to fortify his arguments. His own readings in ethnological work, knowledge of the Sanskrit texts and his competence in linguistic analysis, not to speak of an unusual intellect, have resulted in conclusions which strike the reader by their novelty and suggestiveness. In the introductory chapter the author indicates his understanding of the constituent elements of Indian legends and myths by stating that they "can be traced back to the following sources: (a) Indo-European (b) Indo-Aryan; (c) Extra-Aryan, which includes aboriginal and tribal beliefs as also the cluster of systematised folk-beliefs carried hither and thither in various stages of development by migrating and trading peoples."

Kakati adds modestly: "Against a background of ideas like these, the following essays have been conceived as explorations in correspondence and parallelism. A few legends from the Viṣṇu cycle have been selected for the purpose as they are the best known and the most popular. Though Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa are regarded as manifestations of the same deity, mythologically they are of independent origins."

Kakati characterizes Nārāyaṇa as "the God of the Deep". He points out that though Monier-Williams and the St. Petersburg Dictionary regard the Purāṇic derivation of *nārāyaṇa* from *nārā* (water) and *ayana* (receptacle) as fanciful, this derivation is rather close to the truth, though the word for water should be *nāra* and not *nārā*. The explanation given by the two dictionaries that Nārāyaṇa is 'the son of man' and to be regarded as a patronymic of the personified Puruṣa, the *ṛsi* of the Puruṣa-Sūkta, is not to be accepted. In order to prove his point Kakati produces phonetic analogies of *nāra* from Greek (*nāros*, *nēros*, *Nēreus*), Latin *nāre*, and Icelandic *nor*, *Njord*. After meandering through the various myths the author not only proves that Nārāyaṇa was "the floating god of waters" but also suggests that Nārada, who alone is successful in seeing Nārāyaṇa, might himself have been a sea-god.

In the same way, Kakati identifies Vāsudeva, "the abode of all creatures" with a vase or pot god. There is considerable interesting material on the pot, cauldron, and the pot symbol of the mother-goddess. "The Puranic pot (*ghaṭa*) filled with water is placed on the same level of reverence as the Vedic pitcher (*kalasa*) or vat (*drona*)

into which Soma flows after passing the filter." The essay on Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, All-Enveloping God, is long and difficult to summarize. Kakati concludes that "Vāsudeva is a new god summing up within himself the attributes of all the gods hitherto conceived." There is another chapter on Kṛṣṇa Govindā, the Child God. The chapter 'The Fish and the Tortoise Deities' contains a section on the Dharma Thakur godling of Bengal, worshipped in the image of a tortoise. Kakati, from various analogies, aided by linguistic analysis, suggests that the word *Dharma* (also called *Demurya*) "is a Sanskritisation of some Austric formation like *dōm*, *dēm*; cf. also Skt. *duḍi*, Assamese *darā*. The living tortoise cult of the Kolarians is significant in this connection." In a few pages Kakati focusses attention on the origin of the cult, a task not achieved by Bengali scholars who have written hundreds of pages on Dharma Thakur.

Each essay, whether 'The Emergence of Rādhā' or 'Female Initiative in Courtship', not to speak of the essays having a direct bearing on the avatāras of Viṣṇu, is a compression of a mass of material, arranged purposively and without unnecessary elaboration. It may be added that Kakati often appears as a debunker without assuming such a role consciously. It is his approach to the subject, which is well informed and down-to-earth, that produces such an impression. The essay 'Female Initiative in Courtship', based on *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, could almost be construed as mischievous.

Visnuite Myths and Legends, on the whole, seems to be one of the very few studies of the religious scene in India, produced by our scholars, that deserve reading and pondering over.

—Praphulladatta Goswami

Visnuite Myths and Legends (2)

A short analysis of the contents : There are in all eleven chapters in this book bearing the following titles—(i) Introductory, (ii) Narayana the god of the deep, (iii) Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, the All-enveloping God, (iv) Kṛṣṇa Govinda, the child god, (v) The Rāsa dance and the moon myth, (vi) The emergence of Rādhā, (vii) Female initiative in courtship, (viii) The cult of Jagannātha, its lunar origin, (ix) The fish and the tortoise deities, (x) The Cosmic boar, (xi) The man-lion and the dwarf.

Chapter I deals with the scope and nature of the treatment of the theme. Chapter II deals with the derivation of the word *nārāyaṇa*, some of its Indo-European phonetic affinities, the significance of Nārāyaṇa's association with waters and the serpent king, and draws analogy of the Hindu mythology with a Teutonic mythological tradition. There is a reference also to the contents of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*. It is observed that there is a faint echo of the Icelandic sea god, Njord, in the Nārāyaṇa form of Viṣṇu resting in cosmic waters upon the Śesaṇāga, which, because of incarnating once again as Balarāma, is explained as a plough-bearing god. Chapter III first deals with the derivation of the name Vāsudeva. Of the three probable derivations, one from root *vas*, to cover, to put on, one from root *vas*, to shine, and another from root *vas*, to dwell, more emphasis is put on the last. Sanskrit root *vas*, to dwell, is shown to have relation with Latin, *vasum*, *vas*, a vessel. It has been convincingly shown that Vāsudeva is originally a pot-god. In this connection the predominance of the pot or vase in various primitive and current Indian and extra-Indian rituals is also duly illustrated. In the second and third sections of the third chapter it is shown that Vāsudeva was also the name of a particular political leader or the title of certain political leaders of greater eminence. In course of time, the political chief came to be worshipped as a deity. The term Vāsudeva, which may be derived from the root *vas*, to shine, is shown also to have relation with *Vivaśvat*, the sun.

Chapter IV examines the significance and tradition of conceiving the deity as a child. It has been shown that while Viṣṇu

finds a place in the Vedic literature. Kṛṣṇa is a god of popular origin. Viṣṇu was identified with Kṛṣṇa, because of the latter's popularity. The origin of a folk Krishnaism, development of the cow cult and significance of the concepts of Goloka and Gokula have also been adequately dealt with.

Chapter V presents an examination of the significance of the terms *hallisa*, *rāsa*, and *cālikya*. Parallel examples of circle dances are drawn from all periods of history and all culture grades. The various probable meanings of the circle dance, e.g., symbolic representation of the movement of the heavenly bodies are traced. While in the concept of Viṣṇu and Vāsudeva the deity has a direct relation with the sun, in the case of the *rāsa*, the deity is shown to have a relation with the moon. This leads to the analysis of the moon myth in all its aspects and to a critical reference to the cult of Soma.

In chapter VI, all the celebrated female counterparts of the Vaiṣṇavite gods have been taken note of. They are Śrī, Lakṣmī, Sītā and Rādhā. The concept of Sītā has been shown to be intimately connected with the fertility cult. Many previous myths and popular fables have joined together to build up the story of Rādhā's birth and her descent from heaven. There was a conscious attempt to give Rādhā a canonical recognition like that of Śrī and Lakṣmī. The Rāsa sport, with its predominant emphasis on sex, must have originated from some popular agricultural festival meant for evoking the magical powers of fertility.

In Chapter VII, certain chapters from the *Brahma Vaivartapurāṇa* have been reproduced to show that there was a deliberate attempt on the part of the later Puranic works to give sanction also to certain non-Aryan tribal beliefs and customs. Here it has been shown that female liberty in matters of sex, which has been very common in a cluster of non-Aryan tribes, was given a scriptural sanction by the said Purāṇa, which openly declares that "Popular customs are of greater compelling force than the Vedas." (Kṛṣṇajñāna Khaṇḍa, 126-42). The contents of this chapter under the same title had been published earlier in the *Principal Karmakar Commemoration Volume*.

Chapter VIII deals with the legends connected with the origin and development of the centre of worship at Puri Jagannātha. On the basis of folk beliefs and customs of various people the triple form of the deity at the temple of Jagannātha has been shown to repre-

sent the moon god. The facts that the image is made of wood and that all classes of visitors have free access to the temple are examined to trace the influence of Buddhism and to conclude that originally the deity was a god of the Śabara tribe.

The remaining three chapters of the book deal with the folklore of various parts of the world and the Puranic legends connected with the Matsya, Kurma, Barāha, Narasiṃha, and Vāmana incarnations of Viṣṇu.

A small book of crown size containing only 140 pages, *Viṣṇuīte Myths and legends* is an invaluable treasure of scholarly observations and references. The work aims at confirming the hypothesis that the various mythological elements of Hindus are not all of purely Indian origin, nor did they all start from the Indo-European period; some of them have come down from a remoter stage in the mental development of mankind. Most of the legends were in a floating state until they were gathered up in the Epics and the Purāṇas. The sacred books deliberately incorporated certain folk traditions for giving them a canonical sanction. For achieving this aim the author has selected a few legends from the Viṣṇuīte cycle and examined correspondence and parallelism with legends of other lands and folk traditions. Thus this work may serve as a very useful first book for a student of comparative mythology.

There were certain ancient authorities like Kātyāyana, Yāska, and Sāyana, who tried in their own ways to explain the significance of, and the symbolism involved in, the various attributes of the deities such as their weapons and vehicles. Their views, however, have not been brought into the ken of the present study because, as the title declares, the myths & legends have been treated only in a folklore setting.

—Mukunda Madhava Sharma

Kalitā Jātir Itivṛtta

Kalitā Jātir Itivṛtta is a monograph on the Kalita caste of Assam, the undetermined nature of whose origin has always been a matter of dispute among scholars. It contains four chapters. The first chapter deals with the traditional stories and historical accounts of the eastern part of India, where the caste is referred to. In the second chapter, the writer tells us about the Kalitas as described in the Jātakas. In the third chapter, he has delved into the Purāṇas and the Tantras to extract information on this caste. The work is not merely a collection of information or a presentation of available records on the caste. Needless to say, a scholar of Kakati's stature knew it well, as he himself has mentioned, that a detailed scrutiny of the materials through modern scientific methods is absolutely necessary for arriving at a convincing conclusion. This he has done in the last chapter. A methodical treatment, as done by the author, of the information collected from various sources suggests that most of the information is not contradictory but complementary. As a result, on the basis of the common elements, which have again been thoroughly scrutinized, the author has arrived at certain conclusions.

Kakati traces the existence of a caste called 'Kalita' in Central India, from where they migrated in different directions. Everywhere they kept themselves isolated from the neighbouring populations, thereby preserving their identity. The branch of the Kalitas that entered Assam was very powerful and dominating. Therefore, in those days, the inhabitants of Assam were referred to as belonging to two groups, one formed by the Kalitas and the other by the rest. A section of the Kalitas migrated as far as Sadiyā where they established a kingdom that lasted till the time of the Ahom king, Rājeswar Singha (1751-1769 A.D.)

Kakati has admitted that it is difficult to say definitely when the Kalitas entered Assam. But after analysing the available relevant materials he has come to the conclusion that possibly they came sometime during the period between 200 A.D. and 500 A.D. His analysis is quite convincing.

As regards the religion of the Kalitas, Kakati has affirmed that at one time they were Buddhists. He has substantiated his statement by factual information gathered from various sources.

Thus, in this precious monograph Kakati has given a vivid account of the origin and migration of the Kalita caste. He has also dealt with their religious beliefs and practices and with their social position. He has not conjectured anything that is not supported by authentic information.

The process of the formation of a nation is not the same everywhere. Various factors and forces are involved in the nation building process. The nature, the growth and development of the nation depend upon the action and interaction of these factors and forces. Certain forces and factors help in the unification and assimilation of several entities, which merge to form a larger fold ultimately resulting in a nation. The degrees of unification and assimilation are variable and the processes are also of varied nature. In certain cases such a small unit, though by way of assimilation a part and parcel of the nation, may continue to preserve its socio-cultural distinctiveness. Again, the distinctiveness may also be biological. It requires specialized micro-study to discern the distinctiveness, both socio-cultural and biological, of the smaller components of the nation. It is always necessary to know the nature of these smaller units in order to understand not only the basic structure of the nation but also to look forward to its growth and development.

Again, as a result of the process of fission at the socio-cultural level, or because of social stratification, a larger group may split up into several units without affecting the national bond. Long and continued social isolation of these units may lead to the formation of biological isolates.

The Assamese, a small-nation in sociological parlance, is the result of the amalgamation and assimilation of a large number of populations, both local and immigrant. This nation building process is a dynamic one. For example, the process of amalgamation and assimilation in the Assamese small-nation is still going on.

From diverse points of view, one can differentiate various isolates within the Assamese small-nation. For example, from the classical racial point of view, two major isolates could be distinguished

—the mongoloid and the caucasoid populations, though there may have been exchange of genes between the two. The Assamese people comprises several religious groups, and one religious group may have a number of sects. From another angle, it could be said that the Hindus are divided into several castes. On the social plane, a caste is an isolate.

Thus, the Kalita caste of Assam may be considered a social isolate [of the Assamese. This caste attracts the attention of scholars because of certain peculiarities. The Kalitas are not an occupational caste in the sense that most others are so in Assam. There is no mention of the Kalitas in the Purāṇas, Smṛti etc., where the names of the occupational or hybrid castes are listed. Who, then are the Kalitas? What is their past history? Wherefrom did they come to Assam? And when? If someone is interested to get answers to these questions, he may turn to the pages of Kakati's *Kalitā Jātir Itivṛtta*. Kakati himself prefers to call it an essay rather than a book, as it is very slender in volume. The size of the book, however, is not an index of its quality or standard. The account of the origin and growth of the Kalitas as presented by Kakati scintillates with original, authentic and scholarly analysis.

Such a population study could be made on various planes and also from different angles. After ascertaining the socio-cultural peculiarities and/or biological distinctiveness, one can make a comparative study and then can trace back to the past. Language is also another parameter. Besides, a study of traditional stories, historical accounts and scriptures may enrich the findings in course of the historical inquiry into the subject. One can take help of all these approaches or methods at a time, as these are complementary to one another.

When Kakati published this book in 1943, there was no full-fledged account of the socio-cultural life of the Kalitas (and, I am afraid, even now there is none). At that time the concept and implication of biological distinctiveness was yet to be properly developed. There was no record relating to the ethno-biological aspects of caste. (In recent years attempts have been made by some to collect such information, but the records now available are still insufficient for utilization in such an approach). Therefore, Kakati could not take help of any data collected from the anthropological (socio-cultural and biological) point of view. But whatever scanty information was there, he did not fail to harness that. This clearly indicates what broad perspective he had. Though he was situated best

for a linguistic study, his major concern being historical linguistics, the nature of the study did not warrant any help from that source. As a result, he had to confine himself to the historical study alone.

Kakati is a renowned scholar. Those who are acquainted with his scholarship may be influenced by his other works in assessing the quality of this small publication *Kalitā Jātir Itivṛtta*. But it can be said with least hesitation that even if this small book is studied by a person who has no knowledge of Kakati and his works, he will be highly impressed by his methodical and scientific approach to, and scholarly treatment of, the subject. At the same time, a student of anthropology would certainly come to the conclusion after going through the monograph, that here was a scholar who imbibed in him something more than an amateur anthropologist craves for.

Even where Kakati has been striding like a colossus, there remains a great desideratum to be effectively covered by future anthropologists. The modern conception also warrants some physical study, where the origin of a people is concerned, in ascertaining the original source of dispersal. For, in the event of physical data wanting, the validity of the conclusions built, however systematically, on secondary sources is likely to be questioned. Kakati has done his job neatly. It is for others to run the remaining course.

The book is not voluminous, but it is rich enough in factual details. It gives a clear idea as regards the approach to deal with such a subject, the sources to be tapped to get the required information and also the analysis of such information to arrive at a conclusion. It could be a guide to a worker interested in this type of study. As has already been said, to know a nation one should be well acquainted with its component parts. From this point also, this book has immense value. From the standpoint of pure anthropology, one must welcome more micro-studies of the kind involving other component elements of the Assamese small-nation, so as to enable the cultural anthropologists glean and garner their conclusions to weave in a larger tapestry. There can be no better tribute paid to one who broke new ground in the direction of this still virgin field of anthropological inquiry.

—B. M. Das.

Puraṇi Asamiyā Sāhitya

[A collection of fifteen essays devoted to a critical assessment of some of the different aspects of early Assamese literature : the topics include an analysis of Sri Sankardeva's spiritual ideal, the aims and objects of Vaishnavite poetry, a study of *Kumar Haran*, the *Badha Kāvya*, *Kāṅkhouā*, *Ghordharā* (the latter two are playlets by Sri Sankardeva), the *Bargits*, Sri Madhavadeva's *Nāmghoṣā*, the *Ankīyā Nāṭas* and the "Limits of Ancient Literature".]

This work of Kakati's may be characterized as a typical product of the revival, during his day, of interest in the glorious tradition of early Assamese literature. It also represents him as a critic of the first order. Latter-day critics of early Assamese literature have often enlarged upon, or illustrated, the points already made by him. His style is easy and unpretentious, characterized by a successful adoption of familiar, homely expressions, generally considered unsuitable for literary criticism, to convey successfully even subtle nuances and complex ideas and feelings. A product of mature scholarship, Kakati's book is wholly free from pedantry, and, unlike many contemporary practitioners of the art, he does not wax eloquent over trifles.

In the introduction, Kakati has referred to the cementing force of the Vaishnavite poets in the socio-economic context of Assam in those days. To him they served the useful purpose of national integration and, thanks to their effort mainly, he maintains, the distinct quality of the Assamese language could be preserved unaffected from the pervasive tribal influences. In 'Parakiyā Bhāva' he has accounted for the absence of the amours of Rādhā and Krishna in Assamese Vaishnavite poetry, whereas they abound in the early Vaishnavite poetry of Bengal. In the article on *Kumar Haran* he has proved his power of analytical judgement by comparing the theme of the Assamese work with its original in the *Bhāgavata*. He has revealed himself as a *rasajña* in appreciating the peculiar poetic flavour of the work. Kakati here is of the opinion that as poetry, the Assamese rendering of the theme is superior to its original and the dream of Usha in this work is symbolic of man's aspiration after the beautiful. Kakati has, of course, conceded the obvious superiority of the original at certain points, and has maintained this

objective attitude all through. In the article on the *Badha Kāvya*s he has said that in early literatures the exile of the Pāndavas into the forest is only an allegory of life's agony and pain.

Kakati has brought his wide knowledge of Western literature to bear effectively upon his analysis of early Assamese literature, and while doing so he has often struck a convincing note of comparison. In his article on the *Badha Kāvya*s he has referred to the exploits of the mythical heroes and the knights of chivalry of the western tradition and their Indian counterparts, namely, the warriors of the two Indian epics and their various exploits. The activities of both, he asserts, were directed towards the single goal of establishing an ideal society. The same approach has been adopted in the analysis of the character of Hemā which he has compared—not, of course, quite appropriately—to Una of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

Kakati's exposition is never merely paraphrasing of the text : it always involves analysis and discerning judgement. In his analysis of the character of Rādhā in early Assamese poetry he has established the separate identity of this character and has argued that Rādhā as depicted here is essentially different from the Rādhā of early Bengali poetry. This power of objective analysis is further evident in the essay on the Bargits.

Each of the essays is a solid piece; still, that on the *Nāmghoṣā* outshines all the rest. It is an ideal piece of literary criticism, the like of which is almost rare in Assamese literature. The character of Madhavadeva, as depicted by Kakati here, is indeed impressive, and the analogy of the swan-song as applied to *Nāmghoṣā* is apt.

It is interesting to note that despite his characteristic restraint Kakati does not hesitate to let his literary sensitivity its due measure of freedom in expressing his opinions; to be precise, he has, now and then, brought in poetic imagery for the purpose of critical evaluation of a literary situation or character. His comparison of the rise of Chaitanyadeva to Draupadi's rise from incense-smoke ('Parakīyā Bhāva') or his remarks on the *Nāmghoṣā* (that its devotional psalms have the glory of the glow-worm but no burning power) are instances in point.

The work, an uncommon critical achievement of very high order, remains a hall-mark of Assamese literary criticism. This is one work to be recommended as a model to aspiring critics.

—P. Kotoky

Sahitya āru Prem

As *Sāhitya āru Prem* ('Literature and Love', 1948) came out, Dr. Banikanta Kakati had already established himself as a critic of deep and wide learning, a fine discerning faculty and sound judgement—qualities which, in harmony, made him the first critic in Assamese literature. *Sāhitya āru Prem* is not a work of criticism proper; it is rather a by-product of his extensive scholarship in the literatures of the East and the West. But even here we have a glimpse of the power of Kakati's critical genius as already hinted at.

To be concrete, of the six essays that form the book, the first two are derived from classical Indian literature, and the remaining four are derived from the real life stories of a few European scholars, poets and artists. All the stories, whether they are the two fictitious Indian ones or the four European real ones, have more or less the common theme—the reaction of *the mind of a person of talent* to his experiences of love or a kindred feeling. But the writer does not merely confine himself to the narration of the typical situation in which the protagonist of his essay finds himself. Rather, the situation is used as a device for studying the typicality of the subject, thus expressing *inter alia* the writer's ideas about love and life.

In the first essay called *Nisā Dūt* or 'Night as the Messenger', the author intends to show the nature of love in India in the Vedic age, by recreating the story of a sage's son who had initially failed to win his beloved because of his non-attainment of sagehood (or the state of a seer), but had later won her by virtue of his perseverance in attaining the required state of the mind of a seer. The author here shows how in Vedic times there was simplicity, softness and innocence in love against the stormy passion and the carnal desire for the beloved in later ages. At the end of the story, again, the author has explained the significance of the term 'Sagehood' or the state of a seer in ancient India and has compared it to the state of mind of a scientist rapt in his discovery.

In the second essay *Bhāwarīār Bheṣat Premik* or 'A Lover in the Guise of an Actor', another story from ancient Indian literature of a later age, viz. *Harivaṃśa*, where, too, non-human messengers are employed by the lover, is retold. But, unlike the earlier essay, this treatment is without any overt idea to drive home. In the third essay, *Nārī-hriday* or 'The Heart of a Woman', Kakati tells the story of the unfortunate love of Abélard and Heloïsa of medieval Europe. But once again, the story is more a peg to hang on Kakati's idea about a woman's heart than a mere love-story for its own sake. In the beginning of the essay, Kakati comes to the nature of a woman's heart and shows that a woman can also enrich the life of a man through her love and sacrifice. This is shown against the common notion of the male sex that a woman's heart is "a mere nothing." He also points here to the fact that so far no reliable picture of a woman's heart has been drawn by any woman writer and whatever has been known about a woman's heart from a woman's writing has been influenced by the opinion of male writers and thinkers. Here Kakati points to the talented lady poet Sappho of ancient Greece and says that she, of all lady writers, had probably given a reliable idea of a woman's heart, but her writings are unfortunately lost to us. Anyway, Kakati shows how a woman's heart is also capable of all noble feelings and deeds, through the story of Heloïsa's love and sacrifice for Abélard found in the latter's *Historia Calamitatum*.

In the fourth essay *Soundaryvar Pratāraṇā* or 'Deception of Beauty', the author shows how man's aesthetic desire that seeks beauty not for sensual pleasure but for spiritual joy can stimulate him to create great works of art. Whenever aesthetic desire seeks its fulfilment in sensual pleasures, a man wastes his talents. Kakati points here to the story of the Italian Renaissance artist Andrea del Sarto who in his dissipating love for Lucrezia, had ultimately ruined his entire career. He shows that while love for beauty ending in a mere physical level is futile, love for beauty of the highest order can create on the other hand a Dante or a Raphael. He has elaborated this idea in the next essay *Kabir Ahoitukī Prīti* or 'A Poet's Purposeless Love'. Here the author tells us in detail the story of the love of Dante for Beatrice as found in *Vita Nuova*. Before telling the story, he explains the nature of love where the beloved is sought not for mere sensual pleasure, not for mere physical union, but only as an object of adoration. For illustration he brings in the episode of the Indian Vaishnava poet Chandidasa's love for a washerwoman,

Rāmi. It is after this that, as a further illustration of the point, he brings in the story of Dante's love for Beatrice.

The last essay called *Paṇḍitar Bhūmāspṛhā* or 'A Scholar's Longing for Totality' is on the life story of the nineteenth century Swiss scholar Amiel as it is found in his own *Journal Intime*. Before coming to the story of this talented scholar's failure to do anything worth his unique talent and vast learning because of his innate dissatisfaction with himself in his longing for totality, Kakati explains how a writer must feel a kinship with his subject in order to be successful as a writer. But, then, along with this feeling of kinship with the subject, another sense may come upon the writer which may lead him to a feeling of kinship with the universe. Whenever an artist lacks the power to control himself in his feeling of oneness with the universe as he feels his kinship with the subject, he gets frustrated as a writer in his desire to express himself. It is in this context that he brings in the story of Amiel's failure in life because of his pressing awareness of the limitation of human knowledge and burning desire for totality.

At the end of the story, Kakati, with his scholarly approach to the subject, goes to show how Amiel's failure to create anything worth his talent is a romantic phenomenon peculiar to the nineteenth century when feelings and emotions were more highly valued than thinking and reasoning. The author shows how to the Western critics of the later period, Amiel's frustrated career was "a mere futility" or a "malady of the ideal" because in the West, it is action, not ideals, that is generally valued. But he shows against this how in the Indian tradition feelings like desire for totality or infinity or one of kinship with the universe is something which is always valued. To establish this, Kakati goes to the Veda, the *Upaniṣad* and the *Gītā*.

One thing that strikes a reader of these essays is that Kakati can appreciate love only when it has a tendency towards Platonism or towards *agape* or *philia*. *Eros*, as it is, can hardly be approved of by Kakati if it does not lead to any higher spiritual realisation. Even erotic love of the best kind, which came to be valued in Europe like secular humanism, has not been regarded by Dr. Kakati as worthy of notice. It is for this that there is not a single essay in the collection dealing with the kind of love of Pyramus and Thisbe. In this context, this may also be

pointed out that Kakati in the *Preface* of this book, expresses the hope that these stories of love would help widen the mental horizon of the young writers of his time. One should be aware of the fact here that during the British age, which was the age of Kakati, too, as Assamese literature came under the impact of Western literature, and under the impact of secular humanism at that, love in its erotic form became a very common theme in Assamese fiction and lyrical poetry. Kakati with his vast and deep study of literatures of the East and the West, must have noticed the new development in Assamese literature with a sense of uneasiness and wanted the young Assamese writers of his time to be aware of higher levels of love, too, to which erotic love can ascend.

Another preoccupation of Kakati in these essays is with the Indian identity. In almost each essay, he has made it a point to show the difference of the Indian attitude to love and life from the Western attitude. This is, no doubt, typical of our pre-independence writers who had to engage themselves in a search for identity in their encounter with the West.

Gobinda Prasad Sarma

Pakhilā :

Pakhilā is a collection of a dozen stories for children mostly on classical and mythological themes, based on sources as diverse as the Rāmāyāṇa, the Krishna legend, Greek mythology, Tulsidās, stories from Greek drama including Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, comparative legendary stories from Hindu and Babylonian scriptures, cross-references to the Bible and Dante's *Divine Comedy*—all set in train by the title piece of just two pages, PAKHILĀ, after which the book is named, though it is more an introduction than a story in itself. In fact, the title seems a complete misnomer in relation to the contents unless it is supposed to carry a philosophical inner meaning. The book's drift is, broadly speaking, more towards education and enlightenment than towards entertainment or pleasurable curiosity.

Obviously, to characterise and establish as reputed and erudite a scholar critic as Dr. Banikanta Kakati also as an exemplary writer for children is a very delicate and difficult task. For one thing, so deeply entrenched is the scholarly and academic stereotype of Kakati in the popular mind that the very idea that he was also capable of writing easily and intimately for children shedding the overweight of his scholarship may seem inconceivable. Not that scholars have not written acceptably to children before; neither is it true that men like Lakshminath Bezbaroa or Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua who could write so engagingly for children were not scholars. Still the difference between the author of *Kakādeutā Āru Nātilorā* or *Burhī Āir Sādbu*, or the renowned editor of a leading children's magazine of his time and beloved guide of children's reading on one side, and the scholarly author of precious *Pakhilā* steeped in classical lore and the bibliophile loth to leave his study, is too pronounced to be mistaken. While the former authors give the impression of having set out on purpose to get friendly with and regale the children with interesting fare, Kakati's attempt appears at best, to have been to transmit, if possible, some part of his own deep pleasures of book-reading to the children and edify them on the sly. There seems no doubt that while Bezbaroa and other Assamese children's writers were prone to talk down to the

children, Kakati wanted to pull them up on high often beyond their deserts. Essaying the importance of a writer like Kakati whose interest in children's literature could not have been, by nature, more than peripheral, seems to be of the same order of difficulty as that of estimating the value of say Padmanath Gohain Barua as a biographer on the strength of his having been the editor and compiler of the celebrated *Jivani-Saṁgrah*, a remarkable book in its genre by all accounts. It is another matter if Padmanath had the monumental biography (?) of Lord Krishna to his credit even as Banikanta had none other than Mādhavdev, that great devotee of child-Krishna so enormously enamoured of children's ways, as the model *Par excellence* of writings for and on children.

What are, or should be, the moderate expectations from a successful, if not a brilliant, writer for children? Can one talk of something like a paradigm, or figure out one in such matters? The excellence or otherwise of literary works for children would naturally vary from writer to writer, it being essentially a matter of style or art. Even so, certain desiderata are inescapable. Books for children can be broadly divided into two classes, books that convey information and books providing entertainment. Though, when we talk in terms of literature, it is books of the second kind with which we should be apparently concerned, some books on the borderline between the two classes cannot, in fairness, be ignored. And, it cannot also perhaps be gainsaid that many a mentionable book in our language falls into this intermediate category. That a children's book must, above all, be able at least to interest, if not please, those for whom it is intended admits of no dispute. It should succeed, unfailingly, in establishing some sort of rapport with its immature reader, whether by happy communication or by purveying interesting information or by tickling the child's imagination or curiosity. All education and no delectation cannot certainly make for success in this field. Capacity to wean the child away from undesirable reading, ability to evoke the right and healthy kind of curiosity and reaction, facility in making difficult things intelligible without tears, attractive method of presentation and catering for children's fancies and needs, a keen sense of proportion and simple humour, simplicity of language and directness of approach, plus—and that is an important plus—a simplified version of that allegedly highbrowish quality of empathy, or agility of the adult in putting himself into the child's shoes: these, to my mind, are some essential ingredients of a successful children's writer's equipment. It might be that a children's writer

possessing all these virtues could only be a rarity, if not almost a monstrosity. At the same time, no really worthwhile children's writer in any language could afford to merit serious recognition unless he or she possessed most, if not all, of these qualities. And, it needs hardly to be stated that a great children's writer would have to have a still more extra undefinable quality which goes by the name of genius, and which is as rare as it is invaluable.

How well or ill would Kakati's only children's book bear scrutiny if the above-mentioned desiderata or criteria were to be applied? Dr. Henode Sarma, a professor in the Regional Institute of Language, Orissa, who produced the only sizable monograph in Assamese on Kakati as a literateur that I know of, (*Doctor Kākatīr Sāhitya—A critical study on Dr Banikanta Kakati's writings*, New Book Stall, Guwahati, 1972) has made some points in a chapter on Kakati's children's literature with much of which I find myself in agreement. In an almost laudatory work on Kakati otherwise, Dr. Sarma is rather surprisingly critical of his *Pakkhā* and finds little to commend in it for children. Of course Sarma has not been fair to Kakati in accusing him of writing a book of essays rather than of stories, inasmuch as Kakati has himself admitted as much in a foreword. Using a delightful turn of expression he wrote that instead of a string of stories he could offer only an *epoglā bhakatar caru*—a sort of mixed gruel or hotch-potch of miscellaneous items. Yet, there is no doubt, Kakati himself had not been fair either to the children in assuming a solemn teacher's role towards them as he did.

In his style of writing and diction as in his subject matter and choice of themes, vis-a-vis children, Kakati betrays an unmistakable lack of understanding of the nature of the child's mind and the child's capacity to bear or comprehend. In his understandable eagerness to educate the child he often forgot that when it came to reading a book for pleasure, unlike reading a textbook guided by a teacher or guardian, most children would prefer a language which they could readily understand. Further, their instinctive choice in subject-matter would be towards what was not entirely remote from their range of experience, limited as it would be, and what afforded scope for indulging their sense of adventure or imagination or for satisfying their curiosity. There is nothing wrong with dissemination of knowledge, which is an ought if not must, provided it is wrapped in colourful package and is administered in small but steady doses. If you want to educate the children through your writing you must take care to be sure that what you say properly

registers in their mind. Unfortunately, Kakati does not appear to have been sufficiently careful about such questions, and when we remember he was a life-long teacher, such inadequacies seem curious if not inexplicable. It is not to be forgotten, however, that if he was a teacher, he was also a scholar and it is not unusual for a scholar sometimes to be carried away by his scholarly predilections as to become oblivious of his audience.

Of the twelve pieces in *Pekkhilā*, one deals with the Word with capital W—the *Śabdabrahma*, the Word of the Bible, *Ran*, his etc. Another telling the story of Tulsidas launches off into an exposition of young Tulsidas's hen-pecked nature and mysterious and supernatural elements in *Rāmacarī Māyā*. One long piece called 'Māhilar Mahāśabdhā' is a thinly disguised diatribe against women's lib culled from Greek drama while another is an adaptation of the extremely difficult satirical comedy of the great Aristophanes' *The Clouds*. Only three or four stories can be called children's stories proper, but even they are not entirely free from philosophical jargon or hidden meanings. Even when the contents are not heavy the language is so chiselled and high-flown, as is the great critic's wont, that they are more likely than not to go above the children's heads. Not to speak of children, how many adults, for example, could clearly comprehend the problem of the discouraging impact of foreign rules on the growth of inter-provincial cultural traffic or the implications of the eternal conflict between a static society and the dynamic genius, expressed in the sonorous and highly cultivated language of Kakati? I wish I could give some samples of his language as it is instead of indirectly describing it in order to judge whether it was suitable for children. But, alas, that is not possible and I do not think transliteration is of much use in such cases.

Nevertheless, when all is said and done, one cannot but feel that in one sense the very vices of Kakati, if the limitations suggested above can be so called, are virtues which set him apart from all other children's writers in our language and indeed make him *sui generis* in this field. If the growth of children's literature had been rather stunted in our language it is because not many great or rich minds have thought fit to enter this field as in foreign or other regional literatures. The very fact that an accomplished scholar like him felt the urge to write even one book for the juvenile does us and them proud. And what a mind he brought into the business! Kakati, too, might have been able to write for children in Bezbaruah's vein if he

wanted to. But would it not have been an injustice to them had he done so and not as he did? Even Assamese children have known and heard of Kakati for what he basically was—as a great scholar. And they could very well have felt cheated if he had not given them something higher and singular than that of the average run of children's writers. Who but Kakati could have taken into his head to tell the children about Aristophanes and Tulsidas, Isis and Thetis, Babylonian fish-god Ya-han and the Hindu *matsya-avatāra*, Nārāyaṇa and Narakāsura? It is indeed a privilege for our children that a vastly learned person like Kakati wrote for them in his characteristic manner without affected simplicity and laboured familiarity. The book, like style, is the man, and Assamese children will remain ever thankful to Kakati for letting them come to grips, as it were, with Kakati the man and pundit through his *Pakhilā*.

Instances are not wanting in literary history of writers attaining immortality by writing just one great book. Kakati's slender *Pakhilā* is, per se, too meagre a contribution to Assamese literature for children to place him in the vanguard of Assamese children's writers. Yet, one has to concede that by virtue of the book's and its author's unique qualities *Pakhilā* may deservedly rank as one of the best of its kind and Kakati's position as a children's writer could be second only to Bezbaruah's.

Assamese, Its Formation and Development (AFD)

Considered to be Kakati's *magnum opus*, AFD was first published in 1941 by the 'Government of Assam in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Narayani Handiqui Historical Institute, Guwahati,' six years after it was approved for the Ph. D. Degree of the University of Calcutta. The 'Publishers' Note' was written by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, then Honorary Provincial Director of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, mentioning how the publication of the book was 'in consonance with the aims and objects of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam' ('as the book marks a distinct achievement in the history of Assamese scholarship'). Dr. Bhuyan expressed the hope that the dialects and sub-dialects spoken in the tribal areas of Assam would be subjected to similar scrutiny and predicted that the publication would serve, for many long years to follow, 'as a model, guide and stimulus to such investigation'. While there can be no reason why his prediction should not come true, his hopes have not been fulfilled to any desirable extent.

In the preface to the book, Kakati refers to the rich and long tradition of the Assamese language and its 'important place in the group of N.I.A. languages,' and at the same time he underlines the difficulties he had to face in undertaking a pioneering study of the kind. The three dictionaries (Bronson 1867; Hem Chandra Barua 1900; Asam Sahitya Sabha 1932) and the four grammars (Brown 1848; Hem Chandra Barua 1859; Nicholl 1894; Satyanath Bora) on the language offered no significant help toward its historical study. And since the printed early Assamese religious texts were not wholly reliable, he had to collate them with the original manuscripts lying under the custody of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti at Guwahati. Thus, in the matter of collection and sifting of materials the book embodied the results of 'unaided efforts'. In respect of comparative philology, Bloch, Chatterji, Grierson and Turner were the immediate sources of information for him and they also provided him with the method of his treatment. He expresses his great indebtedness to Dr S.K. Chatterji in particular for his guidance 'all through' and gratefully acknowledges the generosity with which Dr. J. Bloch of Paris

responded to the supplication of an unknown worker' and helped improve the treatment with his valuable suggestions.

The introductory part of the book contains five short chapters in the first of which the author deals with the etymology of the word *Assam*, the relationship of Assamese with other Magadhan dialects and the distinctive period of Assamese language and literature which began in the fourteenth century. Here he sets at rest the once controversial question of Assamese being a *patois* of Bengali by establishing the individuality of Assamese speech. The second chapter deals with the phonological and morphological divergences of Western Assamese from Eastern Assamese underlining at the same time the fundamental unity of the speech forms prevalent in the two parts of the state. The third chapter discusses the sources of Assamese vocabulary identifying six classes of words in Assamese, viz. *tadbhava*, *desya*, *mitama*, loan words from N.I.A. dialects, loan words from English and other European languages and words of non-Aryan origin. After presenting specimens of a number of Assamese dialects in the fourth chapter, the author concludes the introductory part in the fifth chapter where he discusses the non-Aryan lexical correspondences in Assamese vocabulary. The Austro-Asiatic influence is traced in the Khasi, Kol and Malayan elements and the Tibeto-Burman influence is illustrated by Bodo and Tai elements in the language. The chapter closes with a discussion on the non-Aryan tracer in various place-names.

The main body of the work is divided into two parts—Phonology and Morphology. The part on phonology runs into eleven chapters where the various sounds in the language are treated from, primarily, a phylogenetic angle. The first of these chapters, however, is an attempt at a synchronic description of the phonemes in the language. Stress-accent in Assamese has been taken up for consideration in chapter II. The rest of the chapters deal with vowels in initial, medial and final positions, vowels in contact, vowel mutation, intrusive vowels, consonants with all their important features like aspiration, de-aspiration, voicing, blending, assimilation etc, and the sources of both vowels and consonants.

The study of Assamese morphology in the book is spread over eight chapters dealing respectively with formative affixes, enclitic definitives, declension of the noun for gender number and case, pronouns, verb-roots, conjugation of the verb, post-positions etc

and pleonastic suffixes. The concluding chapter of the book summarises the extent of probable non-Aryan influences on the language in the spheres of phonology, morphology and vocabulary.

(N.B. For general comments on the book, see Professor Maheswar Neog's paper above, particularly the extracts quoted in the footnote from Professor M.B. Emeneau's review of AFD in *Language*, vol. 18, No. 2, 1942. For comments on specific aspects, see papers above written by Dr Upendra Nath Goswami, Dr. Sukumar Biswas, Dr. Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya, Shri Bisweswar Hazarika and Shri Tabu Taid.)

—Editors.

Puraṇi Kāmrūpar Dharmar Dhārā

A collection of thirty-five articles, brief and incisive, on the fusion of Aryan/Non-Aryan beliefs in ancient Assam. Most of them were published in different Assamese journals & papers long before they were published under the present title with modification here and there. The author did not live to see the book in its final shape. He wrote its dedicatory note the night before his death on 15th November, 1952.

The book is akin, in substance, to *The Mother Goddess Kāmākhya* (1948), written four years earlier. In *The Mother*, the author had a particular hypothesis to prove and he did it excellently well, referring the readers to appropriate authorities on most points. But, here, his eyes seem to be fixed on lay readers alone; and a familiar, story-telling vein is adopted as a result. The materials incorporated into *The Mother* were presented from a single point of view, i.e. institutional cultus, the figure of the mother goddess being chosen as a pivot round which the diverse beliefs and customs were made to revolve. In the preface to the earlier book, the author regretted that for the sake of precision he had to remain content with analyses of the "official cults" alone, leaving aside the "vast mass of materials comprising magic, witchcraft and sorcery that constituted the popular religion." In *Puraṇi Kāmrūpar Dharmar Dhārā* the author has incorporated all these materials, lending a touch of completeness to this history of the religious beliefs and practices in ancient Assam.

Puraṇi Kāmrūpar Dharmar Dhārā remains the only systematic study so far of the bewildering variety of traditional religion in Assam.

(For specific comments on the book, or Kakati's treatment of traditional belief in general, see papers above, written by Dr. Hiren Gohain and Sri Siavath Barman)

—Editors

Bāṇi Pratibhā

It is a collection of Kakati's periodical essays and reviews posthumously brought out by the writers' Co-operative, Guwahati, in 1966. There are eleven essays on religion, literature and life, and, twelve reviews culled from different books in which they served either as forewords or afterwords.

The first three essays turn out to be the Assamese renderings of his original papers in English, included in *Visnuite Myths and Legends* (1952) : 'Female initiative in courtship', 'The Rāsa dance and the moon-myth' and 'The Emergence of Radha'. The rest of the first part include essays on literature and tragic sense, the ancient religions of Assam, national consciousness, the importance of silent endeavour, the future Assamese literature, the contemporary literary scene in Assam and the achievement of Bezbaruah. The essay on literature and tragic sense was written by Kakati when still young : possibly, the earliest available specimen of his writings. The two reflective essays on national consciousness and silent endeavour, written somewhat in a moralising vein, were addressed to younger writers. The four other essays, one of them devoted to a study of Bezbaruah, show his literary-critical standard in operation.

Kakati, who came to dominate the literary scene of Assam practically from the late 'twenties till his death, was approached by many of the contemporary writers for his forewords or afterwords to their books. Chary of giving praise to undeserving writers, Kakati had often to remain content with comments of a very general nature, avoiding skilfully the question of value-judgement. But contemporary works of outstanding merit, on the other hand, had secured his detailed appreciative comments : *Kathā kavita* (by Jatindranath Duarah) *Dahikatarā* and *Keteki* (by Raghunath Chaudhury), *Tumi* (by Ambikagiri Raichoudhury) and *Soṇit Kuwāri* (by Jyotiprasad Agarwala) could be cited in this connection.

(For comments on the specific aspects of these essays and reviews, see papers above written by Dr. Hiren Gohain, Dr. Dilip Barua and Sri H.N. Dutta.)

—Editors

APPENDICES

A. SOME WORKS (NOW RARE) OF KAKATI

(1) Sankar Dev *

INTRODUCTORY

SAKTI worship was the prevailing religion of Assam from the days of hoary antiquity. From the commanding position of the temple of the Goddess Kamakhya at the heart of the country, she spread an awful and fascinating influence all over the country. The Nirvana doctrine of Buddha did not either penetrate into the mountain recesses of the country or prove of any enduring value before the hard realism of the worship of the Goddess. Neither could the doctrine of World-Illusion of the great Sankaracharya, who visited Kamarupa early in the ninth century, leave any trace whatsoever behind it. The Goddess does not seem to have shared the offerings of the people with any other rival God except with her consort Siva. There is, of course, a Vishnu temple of Haya-Griha Madhava (Horse-necked Vishnu) at a place called Hajo near Guwahati. But he could not have survived in a long competition with the stern Goddess.

At the time of the appearance of Sankar Dev, all people of light and culture seem to have been Sakti-worshippers. Sankar's ancestors were all Saktas, and one of them was surnamed DEVIDAS because of his strong adherence to the worship of the Goddess. Madhav Dev, his renowned disciple, and Bhatta Dev, the greatest disciple of Damodar Dev, both of them of almost unmatched scholarship, were Saktas before their conversion to the new creed of Vaishnavism. There seems to have been a universal Saktism amongst all orders of the people, and, in some circles, abominable corruptions were suspected.

Like all Vaishnava reformers of the time, Sankar discarded the heavy outgrowth of ritualistic ceremonials and propounded the cult of BHAKTI or devotion to Sri Krishna who was the one God above all gods without a complementary second. He asserted that devotion was the first and last condition of salvation, the heartless ceremonials to minor gods were not only deterrent of Bhakti, but even hostile to it, and ceremonials even in the worship of Sri Krishna were heartless. He, however, avoided the danger of extremism in

* *Sankar Dev*, 1920. There are at present several works on Sankar Dev written in English, but Dr. Kakati's booklet was the first to be written in that language. It was published by G. A. Natesan & Co of Madras in 1923.

this respect by making this light reservation that such *chastate* actions could be followed as might be calculated to accelerate a single-minded devotion to Sri Krishna.

Sankar Dev was at one with Ramanuja in not allowing women to mix in the religious gatherings of men, not to speak of allowing them to turn nuns. It is said that Sankar never gave any mantra to females. But this point together with some other minor ones has been slightly relaxed. He received disciples from all classes of people.

He held rightly that no great movement could subsist unless backed by a strong popular literature. And what he did in establishing a literature is simply colossal. He composed songs, hymns and dramas, translated the *Bhagavata*, and composed narrative poems of exquisite taste and refinement, all bearing upon some aspect of Krishna's life, and all this in the vernacular of the people.

BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE

He was born in 1449 A.D. at Batadoba in the district of Nowgong, Assam. He came of the famous Bhuyan family. The Bhuyans were very important people enjoying aristocratic privileges and holding landed estates from the king. Sankar's family was called the Siromani Bhuyan, being the chief among the Bhuyans. His father's name was Kusumbar, the grandson of the historic Chandibar. Sankar's mother died within three days of his birth, and he was brought up by his grandmother, Khersuti.

The wild early life of great men is a historical truism now-a-days. But whether every wild boy is destined for future greatness or not, Sankar led a gay and irresponsible life up to his twelfth year. He gave himself up to wild games and merry-makings, swam across the Brahmaputra river and back again during the rains; went out deer-catching with his companions and indulged in all sorts of boyish pranks. The gay and reckless temper he was developing frightened his old grandmother until one day she availed herself of the opportunity of suggesting to him over his meal, that his forefathers were all noted Pandits, and that it would be through him, if at all, that infamy would touch his glorious ancestry. Sankar looked hurt at this and asked his grandmother to arrange for his schooling.

SANKAR AT SCHOOL

In a very auspicious moment, Sankar was sent to a Tol kept by Mahendra Kandali, a Brahmin Pandit. On a Thursday, Sankar began his alphabet and gave remarkable indications of a keen intellect. Just after learning his alphabet, he composed an exquisite poem made up of simple consonantal wordings without the addition of any vowel sounds except the first. This poem has been preserved by the old biographers as a sacred relic of the great master. His teacher was astonished at this marvellous performance. But the craze for the open air did not quite forsake Sankar. The truant was not far removed from the scholar. Once he bought a day's holiday by presenting some clothing and a coin to his teacher. In the evening, the Pandit broke the entire tale of his truancy to his grandmother. The old lady grew very severe in her reprimand and Sankar took the reproof seriously to heart. He returned to school and applied himself very earnestly to studies.

About this time, a miraculous story is narrated about his acquiring the title of DEV usually reserved for Brahmins. Once it so happened that, on the eleventh day of the moon, when school was over and the students had gone home, Sankar fell asleep in the empty school house. A snake protected him from the burning sun's rays by spreading its hood. His teacher, Kandali, chanced upon the scene and the serpent glided out of sight. He was lost in wonder and divined the future greatness of the Kayastha youth. He asked his pupils to call him Sankar Dev instead of Sankar. Moreover, Sankar was exempted from the task of washing the school house, which every student, irrespective of caste, had to do by turns. But the Brahmin students rebelled at this special favour shown to Sankar and reported the matter to an influential Pandit who grew furious at the privileges extended to a Kayastha boy. But he is said to have been mysteriously reconciled to the new order of things.

THE DOMESTIC LIFE OF SANKAR

Sankar came out a finished scholar after paying the customary fees to his teacher. Kandali announced to his father as a matter of congratulation that Sankar would turn out a renowned and unrivalled Pandit. He had already carried away a profound learning in literature and the Puranic lore, and was at this stage practising Yoga. He is said to have astonished people by Yogic

feats. Moreover, he was showing dissatisfaction with the existing state of things and displaying a profound indifference to worldly affairs. His lonely parent grew alarmed, and, in consultation with the elders of the family, hastened to bind up his flying mind in the silken tie of matrimony.

At the age of about 23, Sankar married a Kayastha girl named Suryavati, but she died immediately after giving birth to a daughter. Sankar's father also died some time after his marriage. A shadow of deep melancholy fell upon him. He stayed some years in looking after his motherless girl, and after giving her in marriage to a Kayastha youth named Hari, Sankar went out on a long pilgrimage with some seventeen followers in about 1483 A.D. His family priest, Ram Ram, and his early teacher, Mahendra Kandali, accompanied him.

HIS FIRST PILGRIMAGE

From materials up till now brought to light, a minute journal of his travel cannot be reconstructed. At any rate, we can mention with sufficient accuracy the sacred places he visited. He bathed in the sacred waters of the Ganges, went to Gaya and then to Puri. He then journeyed over to Brindaban where he defeated some local Pandits in a religious controversy. Then he visited Mathura and Dwaraka to which latter place he took only two followers—Sarvajaya and Paramananda. Thence he went to Kashi, Prayag, Sitakunda, Varahakunda and Ayodhya. In Badarikashram he composed the following beautiful song which foreshadows the nature of the message he was going to deliver soon to the world :

Rest my mind, rest on the feet of Rama,
 Seest thou not the great end approaching ?
 My mind, every moment life is shortening,
 Just heed, any moment it might fleet off.
 My mind, the serpent of time is swallowing:
 Know'st thou death is creeping on by inches.
 My mind, surely this body would drop down,
 So break through illusion and resort to Rama.
 Oh mind, thou art blind;
 Thou seest this vanity of things
 Yet thou seest not
 Why art thou, mind, slumbering at ease ?

Awake and think of Govinda,
 O mind, Sankar knows it and says,
 Except through Rama, there is no hope.

SANKAR DEV THE PREACHER

Wandering some twelve years over the various sacred places of Northern India, Sankar came back to his native place. The mature fruits of his experience were soon to burst forth as a sudden revelation. He had already practised YOGA, and after spending a record period in taking a panoramic view of the main theatres of nascent Vaishnavism in the various centres of Northern India, his conviction became rooted in the truth of the EKASARANA CULT. He was warmly entertained by his kinsfolk after a long separation. People flocked around him to hear the tale of his wanderings, and at their instance, he composed a beautiful drama called *Chihnajatra* and painted with his own hand on the canvas the pictures of Heaven and Earth. He had the accompanying musical instruments specially prepared for the occasion according to his own direction. Thus he entertained his eager friends and kinsfolk by spectacular renderings of the new visions of Heaven and Earth which now took complete possession of his mind.

His people offered him his hereditary position as the Chie amongst the Bhuyans; but he declined this worldly pre-eminence and announced his intention to pass his time in prayer and meditation. He composed songs, hymns, and prayers, all pointing to devotion to the One, and the companions of his pilgrimage like Balaram, Sarvajaya and Sriram were early converted. One of his old orthodox biographers has noted that Sankar commenced his missionary work abroad during his first pilgrimage. And a long list has been preserved of the persons converted in different localities, like a certain Ramakanta of Mathura, Radra of Gokul, Tijata of Braja.

What doubts and uncertainties might have still lingered in his mind were cleared away by his lighting upon the *Bhagavata*. A miraculous story is told about it. A Brahmin Pandit of Tithut named Jagadish Misra went to Puri to read out the *Bhagavata* in the temple. In his dream the Brahmin received the mandate from Jagannath to the effect that he should proceed to Kamarupa and read out the *Bhagavata* to Sankar. The Brahmin searched out Sankar Dev in remote Assam and read out the book to him. His mission over, the Brahmin died.

The *Bhagavata* removed the last vestige of doubt that might still have lingered in his mind. Its appreciation marked the last stage in a process of spiritual evolution and reinforced with the voice of ancient prophecy, the principle of devotion to the One, in which he had fixed his mind. The *Bhagavata* with its poignant note of absolute surrender to the name of Sri Krishna as the condition of hope and final liberation, seemed to promise the only remedial social ideal; and Sankar set out at once to work it out.

He composed a remarkable work called the *Kirtan-ghosha* embodying some select episodes from the *Bhagavata* and other Puranas to teach by Puranic stories the supreme efficacy and excellence of the devout recitation of the name of Sri Krishna. Gifted with an astounding power of poetic expression, he composed songs of exquisite delicacy, all bearing upon the doings of Sri Krishna. People gathered around him, and he loosened their hearts in piety and love. The followers of his pilgrimage all received his new creed. His family priest Ram Ram and his early teacher Kandali were also initiated,

CHANGE OF RESIDENCE AND ACQUISITION OF HIS GREATEST DISCIPLE MADHAV DEV

On his return, Sankar married again at the request of his kinsmen. He had been residing hitherto at his ancestral place, but owing to occasional disturbances created by the neighbouring aboriginal tribes of the Kacharis, he shifted his residence first to Gangmow and then to Dhuwahat in his native district. It was at this latter place that, in about 1522 A.D., Sankar met Madhav, destined to be his first greatest apostle and the most redoubtable exponent of the tenets of his master. Their encounter took place in characteristically strange circumstances.

Madhav was also a Kayastha youth born in 1489 A.D. at a place called Banduka in the same district of Nowgong. He was a past master of the traditional learning of the time and was an upholder of Sakti worship. Once, on the occasion of his mother's serious illness, he made a vow that he would immolate a goat before the Goddess if his mother recovered. His mother did recover and Madhav sent his brother-in-law Gayapani to find a goat fit for sacrifice. Gayapani had been recently initiated into the Ekasarana cult of Sankar, and under various pretexts he evaded his commission until one day Gayapani replied that Madhav might think very highly of himself but he would not stand his ground before Sankar.

To try the strength of his newly-acquired scholarship, Madhav expressed a desire to be taken over to Sankar's place. The next morning, Madhav was introduced to Sankar by Gayajamī. A great controversy ensued over the respective merits of Sakti worship and the devout adoration of the Supreme Being. Madhav brought in scriptural evidence in support of the principle of attachment to the world, and Sankar, in support of detachment from the world. The sun was descending low in the west, when Sankar pronounced the following verse from the *Bhagavata* :

As the branches, leaves and foliage of a tree are nourished by pouring water only at the root of the tree, as the limbs of the body are nourished by putting food only in the stomach, so all Gods and Goddesses are propitiated only by the worship of Krishna.

Madhav bent his head in reverent acknowledgement of the purity and inviolability of Sankar's creed and accepted him as his master.

Madhav was already betrothed to a Kayastha girl, but after the great message of truth received from Sankar, he found out some excuse to break off the engagement. For the sake of truth and his master, Madhav renounced the world once and for all, and in spite of the repeated remonstrances of Sankar, Madhav never entered into the restricted arena of home life.

BRAHMINIC HOSTILITIES

In Assam, as elsewhere in contemporary India, Neo-Vaishnavism was a strong reaction against the excesses of sacerdotalism. But, in Assam, priest-craft took a more debasing form. During the interregnum following upon the disintegration of the forces of Aryan tribal rites of aborigines, put on hideous forms, and priesthood found a steady market wherein to ply its craft. The *Bhagavata* creed of Sankar doing away with false ceremonials went against the grain of the priesthood who commanded the king's ear. The Brahmins rose in hostility against Sankar and abused him before the Ahom king as tampering with the popular faith. The Ahoms were a new people in the land and did not understand much of Hindu traditions. At any rate, Sankar got off free with credit from the trial to which he was summoned. The Brahmins were put out for the present, but attempts at further hostility and molestation did not cease.

The Ahom king possessed a mercurial temperament. One day he caught up the fancy of ordering his people to go elephant-catching. He made them erect a wooden palisade and announced the penalty that those, in whose direction the elephants should break through, would be beheaded. Sankar, as the scion of an important aristocratic family, had to join the party, but, unfortunately, the elephants broke loose through the phalanx of Sankar and his relatives and the king ordered the capture of the supposed delinquents.

Sankar with some Bhuyans escaped from the ruthless ire of the king by flight. But Mahav Dev and Sankar's son-in-law, Hari, were made captives. Madhav, as a harmless Sanyasi was thrown into the prison, but Hari was beheaded because "he had people to mourn for him". Madhav Dev sang the following song to console the last moments of Hari :

Be careful, brother,
Till life passes away,
The Providence of Govinda
Soon will grant you grace.
Trifling is life, trifling youth,
All is illusory, have no care,
Sorrows, throw them off.
And fasten thy mind at Hari's feet,
Desires, cast them off,
Break the trap of illusion,
Saith Madhav, pin thy hope to the feet of the Lord.

SETTLEMENT AT BARPETA

This horrible incident filled Sankar's mind with disgust, and he determined to shake off the dust of his native place once for all from his feet. Madhav got released after a year and joined him. They left the Ahom territory with a considerable following and in about 1532 A.D., came down to Barpeta in the district of Kamrup, then under the Koch kings of Koch Behar. Here, he felt comparatively secure, built permanent houses, erected temples for sacred gatherings and preached his religion of devout adoration in perfect freedom. The remaining portions of his life were spent here. The greatest of the religious works of Sankar and Madhav were also produced here.

DAMODAR DEV (1488-1580 A.D.)

Sankar settled at a place called Patbausi near Barpeta. Shortly after, he was joined by Damodar Dev, a Brahmin youth from Sankar's own native district. Damodar was known to Sankar from his earliest infancy, and it is said that Sankar gave him the name of "Damodar" in recognition of the future spiritual greatness of the infant. Anyhow, during his early sojourn at Patbausi, Damodar lost his wife and only child, but he combated the shock with serene equanimity. At this psychological moment, Sankar drew his attention to spreading his new faith. Damodar Dev only wanted the word to carry on the propagation of the Neo-Vaishnavite creed.

They were also joined by Hari Dev (1493-1633), another Brahmin youth who lived near about Barpeta.

THE SECOND PILGRIMAGE AND FRESH BRAHMINIC HOSTILITY

From Barpeta Sankar went out on a second pilgrimage in about 1533 A.D., this time with a large following. He saw on his way, the burial ground of Kabir and met Chaitanya Dev at Puri. He held learned discourses with him. The mysterious disappearance of Chaitanya is said to have occurred while Sankar was at Puri. Thence he passed on to the other holy places in Northern India; but he was withheld from visiting Brindaban by his favourite disciple, Madhav, who had a secret injunction from Sankar's wife, that he should not be allowed to see Brindaban again. She had a misgiving that Sankara would not come back if he should go over to Brindaban again.

On his return he resumed his customary works of prayer, meditation and KIRTAN and giving instruction to the people. The king's brother and general, Chilaray Dewan, married Sankar's niece Bhubaneswari, and became his disciple.

The Brahmins were feeling highly discomfited at the growing popularity and prevalence of Sankar's faith. They abused the king's ear by gross misrepresentations, and Sankar was once again hauled up for trial. The Brahmins brought down famous Pandits from Benares and other religious centres in Northern India. Sankar approached the king's presence by reciting a beautiful Sanskrit hymn

composed by himself in glorification of Sri Krishna. Then he read a long ovation to the king himself. The king was overawed by the majestic personality of the great preacher, and offered him a seat of honour. Sankar opened the controversy by requesting the king to ask the Brahmins to explain the fourfold meanings of the hymn he had recited. But his opponents hung down their heads in silence. Sankar then clearly explained to the king the main principles of his Bhagavata religion which ran counter to the sacerdotalism of the priestly classes. The controversy lasted for several days and at last Sankar rose triumphant. The king was struck with the profundity of his scholarship and the sublimity of his faith and dismissed him with valuable presents.

SANKAR'S DEATH

Sankar was thereafter several times invited to the court of the Koch king. During his third visit, the king expressed a desire to become his disciple but Sankar refused to close in with the proposal. It would not be possible for kings to observe in its entire purity the perfect religion of love and devout adoration to the one. By virtue of his position, a king would have to worship other gods and goddesses, and the fundamental principle of Sankar's creed was an undeviating love for the one God. There was no provision for the worship of minor gods, because that would mar the purity of his creed. The king, however, would not be persuaded; and Sankar was in a dilemma. He came back to his lodge and asked the king to remain fasting and in prayers to perform the initiatory rites. Next morning, the king's messengers waited at the door of Sankar; the great master washed his hands and feet, put on new clothings, and chanting three beautiful hymns composed by himself on different occasions, surrendered himself to the Supreme Being of his love and devotion, by YOGIC communion, and thus passed away in 1569 A.D. Sankar's eldest son was with him, but the great master nominated his favourite disciple, Madhav, to the apostolic seat.

This, in the main, is a connected story of the life of Sri Sankar Dev. But the inspiring greatness of his personality and the revolution he created in religious beliefs cannot be brought in to proper relief unless they are viewed from a proper perspective in the light of contemporary history. And so a word about the religious history of Assam.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The province of Assam figures in the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas by the name Pragjyotisha and the first Hindu king was Naraka. Though he was divine in origin, being born of Earth by Vishnu in his Boar-incarnation, he was surnamed an "Asura" because of his irreligious propensities. At the time of the severance of the corpse of Sati, the consort of Mahadeva, her female organ fell here and the *pitha* (site) was named Kamakhya, being one of the 51 Saktipithas of India. Naraka was a worshipper of Kamakhya according to the *Kalika Purana*, and grew so irreverent that he wanted to marry the goddess. The goddess agreed to the proposal, but evaded the fulfilment by a wily trick. The same Purana represents Bana, the king of Sonitpur, (modern Tezpur, in the Darrang district, Assam) as a contemporary and fast friend of Naraka, and as a devout worshipper of Siva, who is called Banesvar in honour of his royal votary. Bana's daughter Usha, who married Aniruddha, the grandson of Sri Krishna, was also a worshipper of the goddess. Bajradatta, the grandson of Naraka and the son of Bhagadatta, who occupies so conspicuous a place in the *Mahabharata* was also a worshipper of Siva, and he has been described as such in the copper plates of Balavarmana. At the eastern extremity of the province near Sadiya, there is a temple of Chandika, now known as Tamresvari wherefrom, according to local traditions, Rukmini was stolen by Sri Krishna. Thus, this land of Kamakhya contained votaries of Sakti as well as of Siva even in the oldest period reached only by traditions.

By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Ahoms came from Upper Burma which was not yet under the influence of Buddhism. They were animistic in faith. They conquered the Hinduised aborigines like the Kacharis and the Chutiyas, and gradually set up their authority in the eastern portion of Assam. The western portion was the scene of strife and struggle between the Hindu population on the one side, and hordes of semibarbarous origin on the other, until the palm of victory fell into the hands of the Koches.

Viswa Sinha, the first Koch king, rose to power about 1515 A.D. So far as caste sanctity goes, he was of a rather humble birth but, "as usual in such cases, the Brahmins soon sought him out and supplied him with a divine pedigree."

He rebuilt the temple of Kamakhya and imported Brahmins from Kanouj, Benares and other centres of learning and gave a new

life to Sakti worship. His son, Naranarayan, too, in whose court Sankar Dev was tried for his faith, helped in the propagation of Sakti worship and repaired the temple of Kamakhya in 1565 A.D., after its damage by Kalapahar, the redoubtable Brahmin renegade and iconoclast. He also brought in Brahmins from Bengal to carry on the worship.

Thus the entire province was partitioned between the Koch and the Ahoms; there were also numerous Mahammedan raids from Bengal. The forces of Aryan civilization seem to have been spent up; there arose thus a religion of bloody sacrifice from which even human beings were not exempted. It is stated that when the new temple of Kamakhya was opened the occasion was celebrated by the immolation of some 150 men. It is said further that there was a class of persons called Bhogis who were voluntary victims.

The moral forces of society were fully exhausted when Sankar commenced his mission. It was an up hill work for him to stand against such an order of things especially when the priestly classes, whose professional interest would be at stake, rose against him in concerted activities. Moreover, they could engage the king's sympathy on their side. But the Kayastha youth, with the serene equanimity of a philosopher, the boldness of a martyr and the farsightedness of a prophet, stood up alone, unaided, every moment subjected to persecution, to remedy those social evils which, in the name of religion, were demoralising the people.

THE NEO-VAISHNAVISM OF SANKARDEV

Sankar built his system upon the ethics of the *Gita* and the Bhakti cult of the *Bhagavata*. He evolved a creed that would clear away the existing social evils in its actual working, at the same time, be an expression of the deepest philosophy. His inspiration did not come of a sudden and blow away wherever it listed. There was a slow developing and maturity in his ideas. From after his early school days, he had realised the vanity of things. He took years to ponder over the truth of the inspirations. He practised YOGA before the treasures of the *Bhagavata* were revealed to him. He took a long pilgrimage all over Northern India which was then shining with the nascent glory of the Neo-Vaishnavite creeds. He watched, he sifted and he received the new light. He brought the judgment of mature years and personal experience to bear upon his prophetic inspirations.

THE EXALTATION OF BHAKTI

Sri Krishna was the supreme Being of adoration for him. In his *Kirtan Ghosha*, Sankar lays down :—

For the Satya era, supreme communion by concentration; for Treta, rituals and worship; for the Dwapara, varied forms of worship; but for the Kali era, devout recitation of the name of Hari is the supreme religion.

Just as fire consumes the materials whether they would like them or not, so the name of Hari is sufficient to destroy a hundred sins.

The Vedic rituals like Homa, Yagna, and other sacrifices find no support in his creed. They are quite unnecessary. The following occurs in Sankar's rendering of the *Bhagavata*, Bk. XI :—

“People interpret the *Bhagavata*, says Sri Krishna, according to their own whims. They find sanction for everything except Bhakti. Some make it out that the Vedas inculcate ceremonials, sacrifices, gifts and homas; others, that the Vedas prescribe the worship of smaller gods, pilgrimages and bathing in sacred waters, others again that the supreme bliss comes through knowledge. Their interpretations are coloured by the dominant attributes of their minds. But know thou this, oh, my friend, I am not accessible through knowledge, neither through penance nor through renunciation, nor through gifts. I am not accessible to Yoga nor to knowledge; I am tied down by Bhakti alone”

Madhav Dev has the following passage in his *Nama Ghosha* which gives the profoundest philosophical exposition to the entire creed of his master :

The indwelling divinity of his heart moves far far away from him who places faith in rituals. But who makes it his religion to hear and recite Krishna's name, he attains to Krishna even though not freed from the ego.

But provision has been left for work in the early stages of devotion. “For a Bhakta not fully detached from the world, it would be a fault to transcend Vedic rites. But for one undeviatingly attached to Sri Krishna's name and totally indifferent, there is no prescription”.

But the rites supposed to be necessary for novices must not run counter to the principle of absolute devotion. On the other hand they should help on the easy development of single-minded devotion. "Only so long should a Krishna's devotee observe formalities in with the principle of Bhakti as he is not fully attached to Krishna's name. When fast attached, he should relinquish all observances as hindering a complete devotion to Krishna's name."

The ideal of devotion can be gathered from the following :—

I long not for beatitude, I long not for salvation;
only let there be eternal devotion at Thy feet.

The real Bhakta is he who seeks not salvation, who wants to remain in a state of perpetual enjoyment of Bhakti even when salvation is promised to him. This is the ideal of devout prayer held out to Sankar's followers. The following song addressed to a supposed spiritual teacher sums up the excellence of Bhakti :

"Thou physician of the soul, thou sawest not the easiest remedy. Thou didst a thousand works, still thou attainest not to the Lord and comest to the world again and once again.

Thou spendest off thy years in meditation and penance, in pilgrimage, in dwelling in Gaya and Kashi. Thou knowest the arguments of Yoga but the mind is clouded. Know thou this, except through supreme devotion, there is no liberation.

Entire virtue remains hidden within the name of Rama; this is the final message of all the Shastras. The name of the Lord devoutly taken is the sole religion of the Kali era.

We know of it but grasp not the essence, says Sankara. Transient is this body, never again wilt thou gain this human form, cast off all pride of action and think of the feet of Hari with the sole devotion of the heart.

THE CULTIVATION OF BHAKTI

In order that Bhakti might be effectual, it must be undeviating. The Bhakta must surrender his body, mind and soul to the contemplation of the form, and the recitation of the name of Krishna.

He must possess the qualities of sympathy, beneficence, forgiveness, softness of heart, and complete mastery over his passions. He must be sufficient to offer spiritual advice to people and have a strong conviction in the truth of Bhakti Yoga leading to final release of the soul from the bondage of desire. The society of such devotees has been placed higher in point of sanctity than worship of idols and the visiting of sacred places. For these also might possess the power of purifying the mind, but a prolonged course of association is necessary; whereas the Bhakta purifies people by his very sight. In a society of Bhaktas, the name of Sri Krishna pours in through the eyes, the ears and the mind. Regard is first produced and then comes sole attachment to the name of Sri Krishna. Worship of other gods and goddesses is sternly forbidden :

Bow not thy head to other gods and goddesses; neither do thou partake of the offerings made unto them. Cast not a look at idols, neither enter their shrines; or thy devotion will be vitiated. Make devotion unto Krishna alone and recite his name. Be a servant unto Krishna and partake of the offerings made unto him, and with thy hands also perform his work.

Again :—

Who worships Krishna with a single mind transcends the operation of threefold attributes and attains to the state of Brahma.

THE INEFFICACY OF IDOL WORSHIP

A story is preserved about Sankar's setting up the idol of Jagannath during the early period of his teachership. It was a mere decoy to the hostile Brahmins. They had been long causing nuisance to his followers by forcibly taking off their sacred garlands and putting them round the necks of dogs. Sankar set up an image of Jagannath and invited the Brahmins to carry on the worship. The Brahmins declined the invitation. Sankar declared that heavy fees and substantial rewards would be given. The Brahmins came and worshipped the idol. The ceremony over, Sankar started a debate on the merits of idol worship. It was finally settled that "stones, earth and waters, even these might acquire the potency to purify the hearts of men after a course of prolonged association. But a Bhakta purifies

people by his very appearance. 'The Bhakta stands higher as a purifying agent than idols or sacred waters'. So that the devotees whom his opponents made no scruples to molest were higher than the idols they worshipped. This story is often twisted from its proper bearing to prove that Sankar supported idol worship. As a matter of fact, no image is ever worshipped in any Sattrā of Sankar.

Madhav Dev has the following to show the futility of idol worship.

"unmanifested is the Supreme Deity, how could you worship him ?

How could you meditate on him who is so formless as this ? So purge your mind by reciting the name of Rama"

In another place occurs this :—

"To seek spiritual purgation in sacred waters, to believe divinity dwelling in idols, these ideas are never entertained by Vaishnavas. He who harbours these is worse than a cow, says Krishna.

But the construction of the metal image of the Lord of the heart for purposes of concentration is soundly advised :

"Contemplate the image of Rama in your heart and recite his name in your mouth"

THE DASYA RELATION OF KRISHNA AND HIS DEVOTEES

Unlike the main schools of Northern Vaishnavite thoughts, Sankar preached the *dasya* relations between Sri Krishna and his devotees. The devotee must conceive of God as a servant does of his master. He foresaw that the *Madhura* conception of devotion, however exalted as a personal ideal, could never be fully worked out in this mundane world as a social ideal. Because of its very sublime and transcendent nature, it might be carried in actual application to the danger zone of ultra-realism, when it would fall into less enlightened minds. All writers of Sankar's school style themselves "servants unto the Lord" in the closing sections of their books. The note of extreme humility and self-surrender makes itself felt in perfect clarity all through their writings. The following hymn composed by Madhav

Dev is distinctly characteristic. The cry is not the cry of a loving woman to her love, but that of the servant to the Lord of his body and soul. The note of mingled pathos and hope is quite unmistakable :

Thou guidest, Lord, the inner workings of my heart.
In Thee I am possessed of a Lord.

Remove my delusion by offering me protection under
Thy feet; be kind unto me, Lord.

Thou art the inner controller of my soul; I have
turned a servant unto Thee, know this and be kind.

I take up a straw within my teeth and bow unto
Thee; show me how I may remain in Thy service.

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A sinner like me in the three worlds, there is none:
like Thee too, there is none, who purgest sins. Know Thou
this, Govinda, and do unto me as Thou thinkest fit. This
is my prayer at Thy feet.

Thousands of sins day and night I commit, being
wrapt in delusion. Know me as Thy slave, Thou container
of the world, and forgive.

I know what is righteousness, still I do not stick to
it; from unrighteousness, I do not turn away. I do as
dwelling in my heart Thou biddest me do.

I know not how to worship Thee nor how to make Thee
propitiated. I know naught of invocation or prayer. Hence,
Lord, I fall a servant at Thy feet. May Thou steer my
course.

This hymn in its clearness and simplicity sets forth the
ideal of the *dasya* relation between God and his devotees. There
is absolutely no mysticism in it.

THE PROTECTIVE MERCY OF GOD

It is the protective aspect of God that appeals so strongly
to Sankar and his followers. They want not even salvation, for the
ideal devotees do not like to be merged in the Divine Being, but
desire ever to enjoy the perfumed sweetness of devotion, but they

must be freed from the shackles of delusion. And a cry for freedom from the bondage of the world is heard all through the songs of Sankar. The following song composed on the occasion of his first son's birth is extremely characteristic :

I fall at Thy feet, Hari, and offer Thee humble prayer to save my soul. Languishing with the poison of the serpent of the world, my life is threatened every moment.

Unstable are men and wealth, unstable is youth and the world; wife and son, they are unstable. Whom should I turn to as eternal and lasting ?

My heart is fickle like water on the lotus leaf, it does not settle for a moment, owns no fear, in enjoyment of the world of senses.

Yet another poem of Sankar Dev expresses the cream of his spiritual faith. The song deserves to be quoted, alike for its beauty of thought and phrasing :

O my Lord, prostrate at Thy feet, I lay myself down and beseech Thee with a contrite heart to save my soul.

My soul is on the point of perishing through the poison of the venomous serpent of worldly things. On this earth all is transitory and uncertain, wealth, kinsmen, life, youth, and even the world itself.

Children, family, all are uncertain. On what shall I place reliance ?

Like a drop of water on the lotus leaf, the mind is unsteady. There is no firmness in it.

There is nothing uncertain in Thy grace and no cause for fear under the shadow of Thy feet.

I, Sankar, pray to thee O, Hrishikesh, the dweller in my heart, to pilot me across this world of trouble,

Turn my heart to Thee and lead me to Thyself, O Lord of all blessing and all grace.

Vouchsafe unto me the truth, the right path, and Thy kindly guidance,

Thou art my mind, Thou art my destiny, Thou art my spiritual guide. Saith Sankar, steer me across the vale of sorrows.

CONCEPT OF GODHEAD

Unlike Vaishnavite reformers like Ramanuja, Nimbarka, or Madhwa, Sankar did not start with any Vedantic thesis on the nature of Godhead as the basic of his teachings. He did not therefore work out any elaborate theory about the God-head. The presiding deity of the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata* was sufficient for him. God is Supreme Intelligence, vast, pervasive, without form, without attributes. He is the only reality, all else is untrue and illusory. All that is visible and seems real is only the manifestation of God himself in diverse forms when he chooses to express himself through the operation of Maya. To the Bhakta in moments of supreme trance, God reveals himself in His form without *upadhis* or attributes. This is the real, the eternal and the true. He is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the Universe. As the earthen pot is nothing but the earth itself, and as it is reduced again to the earth when it breaks, so the visible and the invisible worlds originate in, exist in, and end in, God himself. He is without *vikara* or modification; all else suffers modification. He is the controller of Purusha and Prakriti. All other gods and goddesses are nescient. They can promise neither knowledge nor salvation. "At the threshold of God's house, minor gods like Brahma, Indra and others just deserve a whipping." "It is said that Brahma creates the world, Vishnu sustains it and Rudra destroys it. This is the wrong belief of those whose minds have not been fully enlightened. But the wise see Thee aright—Thou art the soul and inward controller of all".

The following hymn may be taken as Sankar's vision of the Godhead :

I bow to Thee, O Madhava, Thou art the lawgiver to him who creates the laws. Thou art the parent of the world. Thou art the mind of the world, Thou art the destiny of the world.

Thou art the supreme soul of the universe, Thou art the one Lord of the universe. Nothing exists in the universe except in Thee.

Thou art the creation, Thou art the cause; static and dynamic, Thou art all, like as gold is unto ornaments of gold.

Thou art plants and trees, Thou art birds and beasts
Thou art gods and non-gods.

The ignorant, think of Thee as different for want of illumination.

Infatuated every moment with Thy illusion, none knowest Thee for the Soul. Thou residest in the heart of all beings; but people search Thee without, not understanding Thee.

Thou art the only truth, all the rest is false. The wise know this and contemplate Thee in their hearts.

I crave not for enjoyment of beatitude, I long not for salvation. Only let there be devotion at Thy feet.

THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF SANKAR'S CREED

The main feature of Northern Vaishnavism is the combined worship of Rama or Krishna along with Sita or Radha. All writers on the Vaishnavite reformation have lamented that the degradation of Northern Vaishnavism was chiefly owing to the adoption of the female element, although the Rama-Sita worship represents a more sober line of devotion than the worship of Radha or Gopi-Krishna. Sankar Dev, as has been said, rejected the female element altogether. His object of devotion is Sri Krishna alone without any complementary second. In his *dhyana* or meditation, he imagines of Hari as dwelling in Vaikuntha and he is the lord of Kamala who worships him also. He adores Hari as adorable even to Lakshmi. He chants also the name of Rama as indistinguishable from Krishna because they both symbolise the same image of the Brahma.

To the form of worship thus established, Sankar recognised the spiritual equality of all people; Brahmins, Sudras and Pariahs have all equal liberty in matters of worship, devotion and chanting the name of the Lord. "Why need one be a Brahmin", says he, "who devoutly recites the name of Krishna? He might be a Chandala, but he is far superior to any man who is not attached to the name of Hari." He recognised only a social significance in the caste system and has nothing to say against *Varnāśrama* duties. People of each social order would follow their own traditional duties, but in religious gatherings all are equal. The sacred texts are read and explained either by a Sudra or a Brahmin according as the one or the other possesses more interpretative power. The Brahmins are offered seats in the front row but the offerings to Vishnu are distributed by people of any caste of cleanly moral habits who may be

selected for the occasion, although, as a mark of social respect, the offering is given first to the Brahmins and the leading men of the society.

The contemporary social and religious abuses of the country have already been noticed. Sankar's new faith came like a flash of lightning amidst the surrounding gloom. He threw open to all people the doors of the Temple of God and, notwithstanding persecution from the priesthood, people flocked under the banner of his new faith. He counted amongst his disciples people from all ranks of society, from the Brahmins and Mohammedans to the aboriginal mountain people.

Out of fairness it must be said when speaking of Brahminic hostilities that it was the priesthood with professional interest that was opposed to him; on the other hand, some of the enlightened and cultured Brahmins were amongst the earliest to receive initiation at his hands. When Sankar began to compose literary works to spread his new faith, some of the enlightened Brahmin scholars came forward and joined labours with him. In some works he wrote only the first few sections and then gave them over to be continued by his Brahmin friends or followers.

In religious gatherings, females are not allowed. They carry on their devotional chantings in the court-yards of the temples in a separate group and that too not simultaneously.

Within the religious temples called Kirtan-ghar no image of any god not even of Krishna is placed. The round of daily devotional ceremonies consists in the reading and explaining of the *Bhagavata* and the *Gita* singing the hymnic songs of Sankar and Madhav and then the devout recitation of the prayers to the accompaniment of musical instruments. This is called NAMA PRASANGA. All these items are carried on both in the early morning and the evening.

THE LITERARY ASPECT OF SANKAR'S CREED

Sankar founded a vast religious literature in order to give a permanent basis to his teachings. He composed all his works in the vernacular of the people. His hand was not wanting in any department of literature. He translated the entire *Bhagavata* and presented some selected stories from the *Bhagavata* and other Puranas

supplied with the proper moral frame work of his own faith. This book called *Kirtan-ghosha* contains all his opinions in a nutshell. He composed popular religious songs all bearing upon the life and doings of Lord Krishna, and inculcating the purity of BHAKTI. He introduced a new feature into his movement by composing dramas in the performance of which he himself took some main parts. No Vaishnavite reformer of the time seems to have attracted people by dramatic representations. He rendered into music, poetry and drama, the entire life story of Sri Krishna. Madhav Dev contributed his share to all these literary performances. In addition, Madhav translated the *Ratnavali* of Vishnupuri Sanyasi and composed another work called *Nam-ghosha* which elucidates a work of the same import in Sanskrit called *Bhakti-Ratnakar*. Subsequently under the influence of Damodar Dev, his renowned disciple Bhatta Dev rendered the entire Gita and the Bhagavat into prose. Bhatta Dev also compiled another work in Sanskrit called *Bhakti-viveka*. Thus, this remarkable batch of scholars and thinkers brought the sublime ideas of the Gita and the Bhagavata into the household of men.

THE SPLIT AFTER SANKAR'S DEATH

Sankar Dev died in 1569 A.D. and immediately after his death, there was a cleavage between Madhav Dev, apostolic successor of Sankar, and Damodar Dev. In whatever personal relations they had been earlier, Damodar soon found ventilation in a small quarrel when the strong impress of the towering personality of the founder was once removed. This led to the main division of the Vaishnavism of Sankar Dev into two sects, the Mahapurushiya and the Damodariya.

THE MAHAPURUSHIYA SECT

Madhav Dev succeeded to the headship of the religious sect founded by Sankar Dev, and as Damodar Dev with his disciples seceded from Madhav's authority, his party went by the name of Mahapurushiya, as Madhav Dev was looked upon as the Mahapurusha, the great man who led the way in devotion to the creeds of Sankar who is regarded as an Avatara.

Madhav Dev organised the followers of Sankar into a compact body, sent missionaries all through Assam, and founded several Sattras, the foremost amongst them being that of Barpeta. The Brahminic hostility broke out afresh, and he was subjected to severe persecution. He went to the court of King Lakshminarayan (1564-

1622 A.D.) of Koch Behar where he was very kindly received. He lived there for some time and died in 1596 A.D. He nominated his chief disciple Mathura Das "Ata" to the apostolic seat of Barpeta.

The Mahapurushiyas are all householders, and carry on all the duties of life with perfect resignation to the will of Sri Krishna. Sankar was himself a married man and did not encourage celibacy amongst his followers. But in imitation of Madhav Dev, who was a celibate, some people forsook the ties of home-life and led simple lives in small cottages near the precincts of the main temples. They are known as Kevaliya Bhaktas (solitary devotees). They profess to represent the society of Bhaktas so much glorified in Sankar's teachings, and as such, old men, including even the heads of Sattras, much frequent their society to have their spiritual doubts cleared.

Officially, these solitary devotees hold themselves responsible for the proper carrying on of the daily devotional observances in the temples.

The Mahapurushiyas receive the initiatory *mantra* at the hands of their Guru, two or more in a body and rarely alone. Those who receive initiation at the same time regard themselves all through life as vowed spiritual friends to one another and never call one another by name. Caste restriction is not observed on these occasions. But a man of high caste does not marry into the house of another of low caste, neither would the former partake of any food cooked by the latter; but they would sit on the same floor and partake of the food cooked by a man of higher caste. Caste restriction is disregarded only for religious purposes, because even the Mahapurushiya Brahmins receive initiatory *mantras* at the hands of the Sudra Adhikaras of the Sattras.

THE DAMODARIYA OR BAMUNIA SECT

Damodar Dev was a Brahmin and his followers styled themselves either after him or after his caste. Damodar Dev left no literary works definitely embodying his views, the religious works of Sankar and Madhav being read even by Damodariya, for devotional purposes. But a few books were written for Damodar Dev by his followers. He was equally emphatic in his injunctions against the worship of other gods and goddesses and in his extolment of single-minded devotion to Sri Krishna. "If however," he is represented to have said, "the ancient rishis enjoin the worship of other

gods and goddesses in carrying on the duties of a householder, first contemplate Sri Krishna in your mind and then offer worship to other gods." But worship to other gods divorced from previous contemplation of Sri Krishna in the beginning was strictly forbidden. There is, however, no such sanction about the worship of minor gods in the canonical writings of his early followers, who modelled their teachings closely on the precepts of Sankar. He was as uncompromising as Sankar against animal sacrifice.

This supposed sanction of the worship of minor gods, if true, as asserted by his present-day followers, might be taken as a new feature introduced into the main Vaishnavism of Sankar Dev. All this, however, is prescribed by those who have not yet relinquished the ties of the world, but he, "who is solely attached to the name of Sri Krishna, transcends all work." Moreover, final resignation is enjoined to Sri Krishna alone.

In social intercourse, there is no distinction between a Mahapurushiya and a Damodariya. If they belong to the same caste, they marry into one another's house. They join in all religious ceremonies connected with the Sattras and the Namghars; only, while the Mahapurushiyas are stern against idol-worship and the worship of other gods, the Damodariyas may perform these ceremonies. Thus it seems that the observances of this sect are more of the nature of a compromise between the old Puranic religion and the new Vaishnavism than thoroughly Vaishnavite. The criticism of R.G. Bhandarkar "that the tendency of Ramanuja's system seems to give an exclusive Brahminic form to the traditional method of Bhakti or devotion to God" would not be much inapplicable to this sect. This may account for the greater predominance of the Brahminic element in this sect. The same accounts also for the fact that the adherents of this sect, though started later, outnumber the Mahapurushiyas; when a certain Brahmin priest turns a Damodariya, there is a general tendency amongst his Jajmans (clients) to espouse the new religion of their master.

The Damodariyas always receive their mantra from Brahmin GURUS and none but a Brahmin can be the head of a Damodariya Sattra, whereas in most Mahapurushiya Sattras, it is the Sudras who are heads and they give initiatory mantras. The Brahmin head even of the Mahapurushiya Sattra at Barpeta was due to the fact that when Mathura Das Ata, successor to Madhav Dev, died without nominating his successor, the question of succession fell upon the

Bhakta public, and after a good deal of factious disturbance, a descendant of Ram Ram, Sankar's family priest, was elected.

In matters spiritual also there is difference between the two sects. While all Mahapurushiyas irrespective of caste are entitled to recite the full mystic formula of Sankar, the Damodariyas receiving the same formula observe a distinction. The Brahmins amongst them recite the full formula whilst the Sudras amongst them are allowed to repeat it only in a curtailed form. There is thus a greater sense of equality and fellowship amongst the Mahapurushiyas than among the Damodariyas.

THE HARIDEVIYA SECT

Hari Dev also founded an independent sect later on. The followers of this sect form a small body, and Hari Dev being a Brahmin, his teachings lean more to the side of Damodar Dev than of Sankar.

CONCLUSION

Within the small compass of this sketch we have thus completed our general survey of the salient points of Assam Vaishnavism. The civilisation of modern Assam is essentially a Vaishnavite civilisation. Apart from the main Sattras which would number no less than three hundred, and which are like the headquarters of religion, every village of Hindu or Hinduised population contains one NAMGHAR (The temple where people gather to chant the name of God). On all festive occasions connected with the life and doings of Krishna, the hymnic songs of Sankar and Madhav are recited in accompaniment to musical instruments. On such occasions, there is no sectarian distinction between a Mahapurushiya and a Damodariya, all joining in the ceremonies with equal fervour and partaking of the Vishnu offerings. Except in the respective attitudes towards idol worship, the distinction between the people of the two sects is more theoretical than practical. And as a matter of fact, even the Damodariyas, on their own initiative, do not show any great inclination towards instituting idol worship; only they have no objection to join when others do so.

These Namghars are something like village parliaments. Their affairs are conducted on a purely democratic principle, every household in the village having an equal voice in the management of affairs.

The Namghars are the court houses where the elders of the village sit in judgment on petty peccadilloes; moral or social delinquents are brought to trial and fined or excommunicated until the fine is paid up, the fine going to the common fund of the village. On bigger ceremonial occasions, several villages combine and carry on the ceremony of recitation of the name of Sri Krishna from village to village by turns.

As a social force, Assam Vaishnavism has been working with marvellous success for about four hundred years, and that too without any symptom of degradation. The strict elimination of women from the religious gatherings of men is a strong point in this school. It widened the pale of the Hindu community receiving adherents from any faith and gave a wider range to social activities. It has fostered the ideas of brotherhood and equality amongst all men and acted as a strong solvent of hateful distinctions. "In other prevailing forms of religion, different people are entitled only to rites variously prescribed for different castes, but in reciting the name of Hari, all are equal, and so, this is the best of all religions."

"Formerly, the stream of the love-nectar of Hari's name flowed only within the confines of the Heavens, until Sankar came and removed the embankments; and lo now it flows tumultuous through all the world." —Madhav Dev.

2. Assam Through the Ages *

The different names that Assam has borne in different ages down the stream of time throw some light upon the races of men that exercised dominance over it. There is reason to believe that none of the three names,—Pragjyotisha, Kamrupa and Assam, by which the land has been designated in different times shows affinity to formations of Aryan origin. Again about the establishment of the ancient Kingdom of Pragjyotisha, there is no tradition in the vast Pauranic literature of Sanskrit. Pargiter, the highest authority about the dynastic history of Pauranic times, observes that the ancient Kingdom of Pragjyotisha is nowhere connected with any of the Pauranic Aryan rulers and would seem to have been founded by an invasion of Mongolians from the North-East though tradition is silent about this outlying development.

Yet the most remarkable feature about its early history is that ancient Assam finds mention in all the great events of all-India import in the Aryan kingdoms of India from the time of the great epics,—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, down to the most recent Tantras. Pragjyotisha is mentioned in the Ramayana in connection with the search for abducted Sita. It is mentioned in the Mahabharata in connection with three incidents of all-India import recorded in that epic,—namely the victorious expeditions of prince Arjuna in connection with the Rajasuya Sacrifice of Yudhisthira, the great battle of Kurukshetra and the horse-sacrifice of the Pandavas.

In classical literature, Kalidasa (5th Century A.D.) mentions Pragjyotisha and Kamrupa in connection with the conquest of the four quarters by Raghu, the hero of his epic poem. In the same epic it has also been said that when the hero's son prince Aja returned from the wedding ceremony with princess Indumati, it was by leaning on the neck of the King of Kamrupa that prince Aja got down from his bridal elephant. This shows the great honour in which the Kamarupa King was held by the northern Indian prince.

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Then in the 7th Century, Kumara Bhaskara Varma of Kamarupa figures very conspicuously in the chronicle of emperor Harsha Vardhana. Kamarupa is also very elaborately described in the itineraries of Hiuen-Tsang and Sankaracharyya. In Tantra literature, Kamarupa has been described as the crown-jewel of sacred places. All these records prove that ancient Assam was a land whose glory and culture in one way or another had to be reckoned with. And yet the most remarkable thing to be noted in this connection is that ancient Assam did never form any part of any Indian empire down to the British times. It stood outside the empire of Asoka, the Guptas, Harsha Vardhana and the Moguls.

Who were the people who raised ancient Assam to such prominence ? Pargiter's surmise about a probable Mongolian invasion has been referred to above. In the absence of recorded history, analysis of place-names shows three distinct strains of culture and civilization that have gone into the making of Assam. In terms of racial designations these layers may be described as what is commonly known now as Austric or Austro-Asiatic, the Mongol and the Aryan. The Austrics are represented to-day by the Khasis and the Mongols by the other extra-Aryan tribes. In Sanskrit literature, all the extra-Aryan tribes have been comprehensively referred to as Kiratas or frontier dwellers.

It does not appear that anything like a mass invasion of Assam by the Aryans ever took place. The Aryans seem to have migrated into Assam in slow dribblets in different periods and that too probably in search of trade or safety.

In Sanskrit *Kalika Purana* of the 10th Century or earlier a glimpse is given of the earlier inhabitants, their racial characteristics and mode of life when an invasion of Assam by an Aryanised prince of Mithila named Naraka took place.

Naraka was the foster child of King Janaka of Mithila and led an invading army in search of a kingdom. The original inhabitants whom he encountered were Kiratas with shaven heads, and yellow skin and addicted to drink and flesh. They were defeated and driven towards the eastern sea.

Their religion was a kind of popular Saivism, but in opposition to it Naraka propagated the new religion of Sakti worship in the symbol of Goddess Kamakhya. He settled twice-born Aryan people

within his kingdom and for some time maintained something like an Aryan influence over the land. But the temptations of the aboriginal way of life were too great for him and he fell a victim to an unrestrained life. His kingdom was invaded by a hostile force from the west. He was killed. What followed after his death is not known.

The next glimpse of ancient Assam is from the Copper plate land grants of certain Hindu or Hinduised Kings from the 7th to 12th century. They were all devoted to Siva and some of them built Siva temples and gave land grants to Brahmins. But the Saiva religion that was in vogue was mixed up with aboriginal customs and practices. Wine, women and flesh were prominent features in this popular Saivism.

From the 13th Century onwards Hindu predominance seems to have been swallowed up in the rise of non-Aryan principalities in different parts of Assam. Early in this century the political picture of the country was something like this : a line of Chutiya Kings (of the Mongol race) ruled east of Subansiri and the Disang; there was a Kachari kingdom on the south-bank of the Brahmaputra which extended half way across the Nowgong district; west of the Kacharis on the south bank and of the Chutiyas on the north were a number of petty chiefs called the Bara-Bhuyans (the multiple land-lords). But casting a shadow upon these small dots on the map appeared the Ahoms on the scene from the eastern corner of the Brahmaputra valley. Their emergence changed the whole course of Assam history. For the first time in the history of Assam, the Ahoms brought together the varied racial groups under their common domination and built up something like an empire and a political hegemony which lasted till the country passed over into the hands of the British in 1824.

The Chutiyas have left a mark in the cultural history by bringing into awful prominence the worship of Sakti in the image of Tamreswari popularly known as *Kesai-khati*, the eater of raw flesh. Near about modern Sadiya, the copper temple of the dread goddess was erected, her most delectable offerings being wine, sweets and human sacrifice. She exercised an awful fascination from her copper temple which was looked upon as a centre of worship for all the hill tribes on the north eastern frontier. Sakti worship which was at a discount under the Hindu kings who were devoted to Siva was thus revived almost with a vengeance. The Hindu Bara-Bhuyans also were Sakti-worshippers. But the Chutiyas made it their own and a class of

priests called the Deoris sprang up as a sacred class dedicated to the worship of the goddess. The Sakti cult which was first propagated by Naraka found patronage under the Chutiya after the neglect of centuries. Later on in a milder form it invaded the Ahom court where under the fanatic patronage of Phuleswari (the chief Queen of Sibi Singh) it provoked a counter-blast in the Moamaria rebellion. But in the horrid form with human sacrifice Saktism flourished in the Jaintia hills among the Syntengs till the early days of the British rule.

The Ahoms were three hundred years in eastern Assam when their power was challenged by another aboriginal tribe fast rising into political eminence with almost lightning speed. It was the Koches with their seat of power in modern Koch Bihar. They were a Mongolian tribe deriving their name from a hillock named Krauncha in the north of Koch Bihar. They rose to power in about 1575 A.D. They were early converted into Hinduism and were dressed up as descendants of god Siva. They became great patrons of learning and religion and almost the whole of Vaishnavite literature of ancient Assam was produced under their patronage. As an independent power their kingdom hardly lasted a century and in 1616 the eastern half came under the vassalage of the Ahoms and the western half of the Moguls.

Thus for seven hundred years Assam, from Sadiya in the east to Koch Bihar in the west, had been under the political domination of one or another non-Aryan tribe. They were often Hinduised, but Assamese Hinduism has all through been a compromise between pure Aryan customs and aboriginal practices. The Sanskrit *Yogini Tantra* written in the 16th century declares that the religion of Kamarupa, i.e. ancient Assam, is of Kirata origin. Fish and flesh India are freely eaten by all classes in Assam. Celibacy is not encouraged and post-puberty marriage only is generally enjoined. The re-marriage of widows is not objected to except among the Brahmins. The blackening of teeth is a common practice shared between Assamese women and certain aboriginal tribes of further India.

Cutting across the adulterated popular Saivism and Saktism came the neo-Vaishnavism of Sankaradeva which in its insistence on surrender to One and only One God reaches back to the pure Aryanism of the Upanishads which proclaim the one entity differently called by different men, *Eko sat vipra bahudha vadanti*.

II

In a land of diversified races and interests two striking achievements stand out very prominently. The Ahoms brought about political unification of Assam never known before and the Vaishnavite reformers brought about a religious and cultural cohesion among the people. Alongside, a language was developed which in its power of expressiveness is second to none amongst the Sanskritic languages of India. Though Sanskritic in origin its vocabulary is largely made out of borrowings from the languages of the indigenous aboriginal people. Synthesis of native and imported elements—that has been the historical line of development of Assamese genius in every direction. Forced grafting of alien ideas has proved its bane.

The Ahoms would have left behind a legacy of prosperous Assam, but in an evil hour the court decided to experiment with grafting of imported ideas. When king Rudra Singh (1696—1716) in his Zeal of a convert for a new religion made up his mind to invite Krishnaram Bhattacharyya, a famous Mahant of the Sakta sect in the Nadia district of Bengal, something like a time bomb was planted beneath the Ahom throne. Under the opiate influence of foreign ideas quickened by vested interests, his successors failed to look about themselves. The time bomb matured and its first detonation was heard when the Moamaria Vaishnavites threw out a challenge to the Ahom throne (1769). Decline rapidly set in and gathered momentum till the might and majesty of the Ahom empire were laid to the dust by the Burmese invasion (1819—1824). Thus the mistake of a moment under the soporific influence of Court sycophancy undid the splendid work of seven hundred years !

When Assam came under the British in 1824, she was prostrate and bleeding and scarce knew herself. To her self-inflicted injury was added the gratuitous insult of having her language taken away. After about ten years of British rule, Assamese was superseded by Bengali as the language of the court and the medium of instruction in the schools (1836—1873). Assamese intellect spent itself in fighting this humiliation and could not express itself in literature and art under the first impact of European civilization.

But, for the first time in history, Assam became a part of all India under the British. Assam was too impoverished in mind and matter to look beyond the head of her new master and remained a passive spectator to what was happening elsewhere in India.

Moreover the memory of the Burmese atrocity was too green to encourage such a mental effort. The British committed the hills to the care of the missionaries and looked after the plains through administrative officers. Assam did not prosper but the British preserved Assam safe for the Assamese. Assam was drawn into an all India vortex in 1921 when Mahatma Gandhi turned the Indian National Congress into a fighting organization. Prior to that Assam never cared to send out a single delegate to the Congress.

To-day, the Mahatma's Congress has triumphed. India is free and Assam is a vital part of the Indian Union. Assam has grown in isolation in history unused to the sly manoeuvres of diplomatic jugglery. Mahatma Gandhi's patriarchal soul had a soft corner for the poor and the lowly and the blessings of the Mahatma should not be mistaken as the triumph of Assamese leadership. Now that the Mahatma has quitted the scene, battle of wits has begun amongst groups of contending politicians. The doors of Assam have been thrown open to the manifold interests of Pan-India and coming events are already casting their shadows before. Assam will have to fight its battle on the plane of cold intellect unwarmed by blandishment of power and self, or she is likely to face the predicament to read her history backwards and shrink into a geographical expression on the map of India.

3. THE KALITA CASTE OF ASSAM *

1. The *kālitas* are a people of undetermined origin in Assam. They represent the main bulk of the fully Aryanised population. The social purity of a certain Assamese locality is judged by the number of *Kalitā* households in the place. In social ranking they occupy a position next to the Brahmins. They are regarded as *sat śūdras* and observe Hindu rites in all their purity. Their main occupation is cultivation but as there are no functional castes in Assam, they figure also as goldsmiths, blacksmiths, bell-metal workers, etc.

2. The *Kalitās* spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley from Sadiya in the east to Rangpur in north Bengal (which was a part of ancient Assam). But they constitute the most preponderating elements in the four districts of Kamrup, Nowgong, Darrang and Sibsagar. They appear to have held great sway in the past and foreign observers have often divided the people of mediaeval Assam into the *Kalitās* and the rest. The author of the *Fatīyah-i-Ibriyah* who accompanied Mir Jumlah throughout his expedition to Assam in 1662 A.D. says that the ancient inhabitants belong to two nations, the *Ahom* and the *Kalitā*. This statement is apparently intended to apply to the country named Garhgaon in eastern Assam. (GAIT : *History of Assam*, 1st Edn. p. 138.) In western Assam, the people were often divided into *Kalitās* and the *Koches* (MARTIN : *Eastern India*, Vol. iii, p. 545).

3. It seems rather curious that no writer on castes and tribes of India has ever tried to connect the *Kalitās* with any Aryan or non-Aryan tribes. GAIT contents himself with the remark that the *Kalitās* of the Brahmaputra valley have often a distinctly Aryan appearance and although they certainly contain other elements they are possibly to some extent the descendants of the first Aryan immigrants by women of the country (*History of Assam*, p.6.). Amongst the *Kalitās* themselves there is a tradition that they were originally

* Reprinted from *A Volume of Indian and Iranian Studies* presented to Sir E. Denison Ross, Kt. C. I. E.

Kshatriyas, that they concealed their caste to avoid the wrath of Parashurama when he was out exterminating the Kshatriyas and that the same name Kalid is a corruption of *Kula-lupta*. The connection of Kalid with *Kula-lupta* is a piece of folk-etymology and seems due to some accidents of history. (Cf. 22).

4. Kalitās are heard of also in other parts of India. There are *Kalitās* (*Kalitas*, *Kaltas*) in the Sambalpur district of modern Orissa and they constitute a great cultivating caste there (*Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1909, *Bengal*, Vol. ii, pp. 309, 312-13). According to their own tradition they immigrated from the state of Baudh and their ancestors were water-carriers in the household of Ramachandra (R.D. BANERJI, *History of Orissa*, Vol. i., p. 24). In the Tons valley and Jaunsar Bawar of Nepal there are two classes of people : (1) the upper classes being Rajputs or Brahmins and (2) the lower classes the *Kaltas*. The latter are not depressed classes, only generally they work as servants. (E.C. MOBBS : *Indian Forester*, Vol. ix, pp. 663-799 referred to in JARS. Vol. iii., No. 3, p. 87). The *Kaltas* of the Himalayan regions are obviously immigrants from the plains in historical times along with the Rajputs. In the absence of similar traditions among the Sambalpur *Kalitas*, the *Kula-lupta* theory would appear to be confined only amongst the Assamese *Kalitās*.

5. Quite recently there has been some amount of discussion amongst Assamese writers about the origin of the *Kalitas* in the *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Gauhati (Vols. i & iii. Nos. 3, & 3, 4). Some uphold the *Kula-lupta* hypothesis, others suggest that they were Aryans migrating into Assam long before the Aryans in the Punjab divided themselves into the four *varṇas* etc.

6. In pursuance of the *Kula-lupta* theory one writer, in an article called *The Kalitas of Kāmarūpa* (JARS. Vol. i No. 3), has sought to connect *Kalitā* with *Kolia*, *Kalatia*, *Kalti* of the early Greek writers about ancient India, and to *Kuluta*, *Kulattha*, *Kulatya* etc., of the *Purāṇas*. These are all names of tribes in western and north-western India and they are often grouped in the *Purāṇas* with rude and ferocious tribes like the Hunas and the Kambojas etc. The *Kolia*, *Kalatia*, *Kalti* of the Greek geographers may have references to Pauranic tribes like the *Kelatoyas* of north-western India. The *Kulutas* of the *Purāṇas* survive in the place-name *Kulu* in the Kangra district in the upper valley of the Bias river, Punjab (N.L. DEY : *Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India*). Phonetically also

Kalita cannot happily be connected with *Kalita*, *Kolita* or *Kolta*. Beyond similarity of consonantal sounds no other archaeological evidence to support cultural contact between the extreme east and the extreme west has been adduced.

7. The caste-name *Koliā* would, however, sustain a better affiliation with the following tribal names of the Purāṇas : *Kala* (*Mark. Ivii*, 32); *Kalibala* (*Ibid* ; *Ivii*, 49); *Kalitola* (*Vāyu* : xiv, 128); *Kolavana* (*Ibid*); *Kariti* (*Mahabharata*; *Bhīṣma* ix 44) : *Ut-kala*, *Me-kala*, (*Mbh. Bhīṣ. ix*, 41); also *Kalinga*; *kalada*, *kalava*, *kalkala* (*SORENSEN* ; *Index to the Mahābhārata*). These are all names of tribes living south of the Vindhya. As the tribal names of the Dravidian people have been separately enumerated in the Purāṇas, these names may be assumed to have references to a people or peoples different from the Dravidians. Further, these varied names perhaps refer to the branches of one central tribe with the element, *-kal-*, as the basic constituent of the main tribal name.

8. Amongst these analogous terms the nearest approach to the word *Kalitā* is found in the formations *Kalitaka*, and *Kariti*. The presence of *Kalitās* in Sambalpur, where, by their own tradition, they had migrated from Baudh still further south, raises some suspicion about the original southern habitat of the *Kalitās* whence in some pre-historic time across Bihar they entered into Assam through north Bengal.

In the absence of definite records about the early history of the *Kalitās*, certain side-lights may perhaps be gathered from instances of cultural contact between Assam and Southern India.

9. It has been pointed out by historians of the Far-East that Indian colonists seem to have proceeded to the Far-East both by land and sea and that the land route passed through Eastern Bengal, Manipur and Assam (*R.C. MAJUMDAR* : *Indo-Aryan Colonies in the Far-East* : Vol. i *Champa*, pp. xi, xiii). It has also been noted that the beginning of the Indian Colonial kingdoms is not later than the second century A.D. (*Ibid*, p. xvi). This trade route through Assam might be one of the many causes of the migrations of people from other parts of India to Assam.

10. *The Kālikā Purāṇa* (composed not later than the 10th cent. A.D.) from its mass of topographical details about ancient Assam may be presumed to have been composed in ancient Assam or

in some contiguous tract. From its re-handling of the older legends about Narakasura it appears that Naraka was the first Aryanised king and that prior to his time Assam was a land of barbarians or *mlecchas*. According to this Purāṇa he was born of Earth by Viṣṇu and brought up in Videha in the court of Janaka (K.P. xxxviii 21). Having killed Ghataka, the Kirāta king, he was installed king of Prāgjyotiṣa by his reputed parent God, Viṣṇu. He brought over the first batch of twice-born people and settled them in the region between the Karatoyā river in the west and the Lalitakāntā in the east. (Ibid. xxxix. 31,32). He is said to have married a daughter of the king of Vidarbha (modern Berar) named Māyā (Ibid. 34, 35). It is to be noted that in the accounts of Naraka in the Mahāpurāṇas, no mention of his early training in Videha or of his marriage in Vidarbha seems to have been made.

By foisting these details on Naraka, the author of the *Kālikā Purāṇa* might have hinted at the immediate and remote cultural relationship between Assam, north Bihar and Southern India (Berar).

11. These earliest immigrants seem to have been worshippers of Viṣṇu. Naraka himself is represented as being the son of Viṣṇu and the *Kālikā Purāṇa* notes it that the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa became known as Kamarupa only after the settlement of the twice-born (xxxix. 34). While the author reconciles the cults of Viṣṇu and Śakti by representing Naraka as a devotee of Kāmākhyā, a sort of intolerance for the Saiva cult seems to be suggested by making the association of Bāṇa, the king of Sonitpura and a devoted worshipper of Śiva, mainly responsible for the subsequent debasement of Naraka's character (xi. 6,7). Folk-mythology connects various localities of Assam with some of the heroic exploits in the life of Kṛṣṇa. Vidarbha is located in Śādiyā, in the extreme east of Assam whence Rukmiṇi was carried off by Kṛṣṇa. The horses of his chariot got tired at a place called Aśvaklānta near Gauhati. Kṛṣṇa vanquished Bāṇa and his protecting god Śiva at a place called Tezpur in the Darrang district. No place, however, is associated with the scenes of his sports in Vṛndāvana or Gokula. If folk-mythology may be looked upon as reminiscences of the local legends of the early immigrants, they must have come over at a time and from a place when and where these legends were fondly cherished and dwelt upon. The Vidarbha legends point to the southern origin of the earlier colonists.

12. That some sort of cultural intercourse existed between Assam and Southern India is shown by the presence of ancient Asa-

these scholars in the south. Kumarila Bhattacharya, the celebrated teacher of the Mimamsa philosophy and opponent of the Buddhists, who flourished a little prior to Sankarācārya is supposed by some to have been a native of Kamarupa (G.N. AIYAR : *Sri Sankarācārya, His Life and Times*, p. 26). There is mention of a certain Assamese or Kamarupa scholar named Vishnusomācārya in the copper plate inscriptions of Anantavarman, the Ganga King of Kalinga, 922 A.D. (R.D. BANERJEE : *History of Orissa*, Vol. I, pp. 233 et seq.).

13. Archaeological scholars like R.D. BANERJEE and K.N. DIKSHIT have found in the architectural ruins of ancient Assam points of resemblance to the Chalukya columns of the Bombay Presidency, Chaitya window patterns so common in the temples of Central India, (esp. those in the Rewa state and at Khajuraho), in the Gupta temples at Bhumra and Deogarh (R.D. BANERJEE : *Annual Reports*, 1924-25 : 1925-26; *Archaeological Survey of India*). K.N. DIKSHIT is a little more explicit about the source of the inspiration of ancient Assamese art. "The affinities of Assamese art would seem to lie more with the schools of Bihar and Orissa than with contemporary Pāla art of Bengal. This is not unnatural as, of the streams of influence that have moulded the culture of Assam, the strongest current has always been from *North-Bihar and Mid-India*" (*Annual Report*, 1927-28, *Archaeological Survey of India* : quoted in K.L. BARUA's *Early History of Kamrupa*).

14. Linguistic affinities would also confirm the findings of the archaeologists. There are homely Assamese words which often with slight variations in meaning show parallel equivalents in Oriya, Bihari, Hindusthani and other western dialects. These might have descended from common sources and in some cases might also have been due to migrations of people from different centres of Northern India in different times.

15. But there is a class of common Assamese words that have similar formations only in the southern and westernmost languages and dialects like the Marathi, the Bhatri, the Bhulia (the latter two being mixtures of Marathi, Oriya and Eastern Hindi). These formations do not seem to be shaped by intermediate languages. In this connection the Assamese equivalents for *water* and *fire* seem to yield interesting results. Assamese *pānī* for water is common to all the dialects of Bihari and Eastern Hindi. But Assamese *zui* for fire has parallels only in *joy* and *jwe* of the Bhatri dialect of Oriya and in the Bhulia dialect of Eastern Hindi, both across the Vindhyas. Other parallel formations are presented in the table below :

Assamese

khāḥ, savage hunger
khacā, knotty as a tie,
khācani, scraper
khāp, a notch
jakarā (*bhāt*), surplus rice kept
 over a next meal
lāḡarani, edition of a book;
bārāḡani, subscription;
 etc.

Marathi

khaukha, savage, miserly.
khacca, hard and fast.
khācani.
khāp.
jakerā, surplus articles.
lāḡaran, improvement.
bārāḡā
 etc.

Assamese

beli, the sun;
zon, the moon;
carāi, bird
car (*carai*), }
son, gold
rūp, silver
kon, who
kāy, who (Kamrup)
āru, and
mai, I
āmi, we
chān }
saru } Younger
gahanā-gaṭhūri, ornaments;
teṭu, neck,
dagalā, a kind of shirt
 etc.

South Indian dialects

ber (Halabi); *beir* (Nagpuria)
joa (Halabi); *janka* (Bhulia),
carae (Bhulia), *carai* (Nagpuria)
son (Halabi).
rup (Halabi).
kon (Halabi).
kay, what (Halabi).
aru (Halabi), *aru* (Laria)
mai (Halabi).
ami (Halabi).
san }
saru } "(Younger)
gahana-gaṭha-la (Lariā).
teṭu (Lariā)
dagalā (Lariā)
 etc.

Some of the above listed words are of Sanskrit origin. But they have been selected here with a view to their phonetic and semantic identity. These as well as the common words of unknown origin in vogue both in Assamese and in Southern India may be looked upon as pointing to some sort of racial contact rather than as instances of borrowing on either side.

16. There is another class of words in the Kāmrupī dialect of the Assamese language. Their formations can be explained on the supposition that they originally carried a strong initial stress which differentiates the Marathi language from other modern Indo-Aryan

languages which carry a penultimate stress (TURNER : *The Indo-Germanic accent in Marathi*, JARS, 1916). It should be noted that in two distinct dialectical regions of Assam, two different systems of accentuation prevail. In the Kāmarūp district a strong initial stress prevails as in Marathi, but in the eastern districts the prevalent stress is on the penultimate syllable. Often, therefore, two distinct formations from the same Sanskritic source are met with. Compare the following formations :

- Skt. *kaṭāha-*; Mar. *kaṭhai* ; Kamrupi, *karē* (*katāi*).
 Eastern As. *kerāhi*, a frying vessel.
 Skt. *jāmātṛ-*; Mar. *javai*, Kam. *jāwe* (*jāvai*)
 Eastern As. *jōwāi*, son-in-law.
 Skt. *kumāra-*; Mar. *kūvar* ; Kam. and East. As. *kōvar*, a prince.
 Skt. *nanandī-*; Mar. *nanad* ; Kam. and East. As. *namad*,
 husband's sister.
 etc. etc.

Similarities of this type cannot be pronounced to be wholly fortuitous. They may strengthen the suspicion of racial contact or migration of a considerable batch of Aryan speakers from some regions where similar accentuation prevailed.

17. All these divagations are called for by the absence of definite records about the early history of the Assamese *Kalitās*. These may heighten the suspicion raised by the similarity of pauranic tribal names. GRIERSON speaks of a certain mixed dialect called *Kalaṅga* in the feudatory state of Patna in the south-west of Orissa. Whether *Kalaṅga* might have anything to do with the pauranic *kala-* is not known. (Cf. also place-name *Kati-Koṭ* in Southern Orissa.)

18. A few words need be said about the probable origin or the *Kula-lupta* theory amongst Assamese *Kalitās*. The author of the article the "Kalitās of Kāmarupa" (JARS., I, 3) speaks of a tradition "that the *Kalitās* were a powerful people who ruled a part of the country at the foot of the Himalayan mountains,—even now one comes across an old Assamese very occasionally who believes in the existence of such a kingdom and thinks that some day the *Kalitā-rāj* will rule over the whole of Kāmarūpa." This however seems to have reference to certain incidents in mediaeval Assamese history. (Cf. §§ 20, 21.)

19. Near about the middle of the fifteenth century a dynasty of three powerful kings ruled in Kāmatā in western Assam. They are

known as *Khen* or *Khyān* Kings. The dynasty was founded by a cowherd boy who on ascending the throne called himself Niladhwaj. It is said that Niladhwaj in his early years was the cowherd of a Brahmin who foretold that he would become king and helped him to overthrow the last degenerate descendant of the Pāl family. On ascending the throne Niladhwaj made his old Brahmin master his chief minister and imported many Brahmins from Mithilā. Niladhwaj was succeeded by Chakradhwaj and the latter by Nilāmbar who was overthrown by Husain Shah in 1498 A.D. Nilāmbar was taken prisoner, put into an iron-cage to be carried to Gaur, but he escaped on the way and was never heard of again. It is popularly believed that he has ever since remained concealed. Buchanan Hamilton says that the people of Kamrup look for his restoration when the usurpers, western barbarians, shall be driven out of the land (*Eastern Bengal and Assam District Gazetteers : Rangpur*, 1911, p.23). Nilāmbar has thus become the King Arthur of Assamese folk-legends.

20. The dynasty founded by Niladhwaj is called *Khen* or *Khyān*. The word *khen* or *khyān* has always remained a riddle with Assam historians. The author of the *Early History of Kāmarūpa* has in his perplexity cut through the vowels and equated *khen* or *khyān* to *khān*, a Bengali Mahomedan title. Now *khen* is an Austric word for a *child* : cf. *Ken* (Pang); *Ki-yen* (Kerbat); *Khen* (Samre); C 102 ; *Khun* (Khasi). The Austric equivalent for an *orphan* is *Khun-rei* (Khasi); *Ke-non re-ni* (Sak.) 0.57.

21. Niladhwaj was an orphan cowherd and on ascending the throne he must have made himself known as something like **Khen-rei* in glorification of the obscurity of his early years. In folk-etymology **Khen-rei* must have passed into something like **Khen-ray*, *Khen-King*.

The word *khen* or **khen-rei* does not occur in modern Assamese, but from the large number of Austric words preserved in modern Assamese (cf. NIA., I, 265, 571), it may be presumed that it was then a living or at least, not a unknown formation.

22. Royal families in Indian history have always been dressed up with a divine or respectable pedigree. Niladhwaj, an orphan, concealed the identity of his obscure parentage. And so perhaps he was called a *kala-lupta*, a learned coinage of the priestly panegyrists with an equivocal meaning. In reality it referred to the obscurity of his family but the priestly panegyrists must have scored

by suggesting that he belonged to the Kshatriya caste that had concealed its identity for fear of Parasurama. Many a caste has thus thrown the whole blame on Parasurama's shoulder for its comparative low position in society.

23. Some of the adherents of the royal clan made themselves known as *khens*, just as the *koche*s of western Assam made themselves known as *Rajbansis* after the Koch kings had established themselves at Koch-Bihar. Even now there are *khens* in the Rangpur district of modern Bengal, the stronghold of the *khen* kings. They numbered 12,000 in the census of 1911. "They are orthodox Hindus and are served by the same Brahmans as the Nabasakha group (of Bengal). Dr Buchanan Hamilton states that they are the only Kamrup tribe that the Brahmans of Bengal admit to be true Sudras which clearly shows the great power that their princes held. At the present day their chief occupations are cultivation and domestic service under high caste Hindus. In Assam they are known as *Kolitās* (*District Gazetteer* : 1911 ; Rangpur, p. 46).

24. GAIT detects a considerable infusion of Aryan blood in their physiognomy (*History of Assam*, p. 41), as he has done in the case of the *Kalitās* (cf. 3). He also says that the great majority of them have been absorbed in the ranks of other communities but the few who retain the old name claim to be *Kāyasthas* (*Ibid*). But it has become a fashion for the *Kalitās* of Rangpur to make themselves known as *Kāyasthas*. *Kalitās* are unknown in Bengal and along with the transfer of Rangpur from Assam to Bengal, the *Kalitās* have mostly equated themselves to the *Kāyasthas* not to "abide questions" in social intercourse. MARTIN observes that "a numerous tribe called *Kalita* who once had great sway here (Rangpur), as they still have in Assam, have in the more civilized parts assumed the title of *Kayostho* and conceal their descent from the *Kolitas*" (*Eastern India*, Vol. iii. p. 528).

25. If the *Kula-lupta* theory can thus be disposed of, the early history of the *Kalitās* themselves as a tribe remains largely a matter of uncertainty in the absence of further materials. The presence of *Kalitās* in Sambalpur coupled with probable instances of linguistic and other archaeological parallelisms between Assam and South India noticed in the foregoing sections would seem to make the suspicion about their migration from the south not wholly unfounded. More than half the inhabitants of Assam is made up of

Tibeto-Burman people. They are indigenous to the province. Genuine Kāyasthas constitute a handful and their ancestors migrated into Assam in historical times. Other castes like *Kewats*, *Kumars*, *Śuris* etc. have pan-Indian denominations and might as well belong here as come from elsewhere. It cannot be said that they were brought over by king Narakasura to Aryanise the kingdom. The topmost position of the *Kalitās* amongst the fully Aryanised population seems to lend itself to the interpretation that they came in with the earliest Brahmins. But nothing definitely can be said till more materials are available. But as there are *Kalitās* also in other parts of India, it is hoped that better informed scholars will throw greater light upon this subject.

4. Conjunctive Participles as Pleonastic Suffixes in the Magadhan dialects*

[Abbreviations :

A—Assamese, B—Bengali

L.S.I.—*Linguistic Survey of India* by Grierson.

O.D.B.L.—*Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* by Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji

Pischell—Pischell's *Grammatik der Prakrit Sprachen*]

The Magadhan dialects present the strange phenomenon of using conjunctive participles as pleonastic suffixes after fully inflected vowel forms to add certain emphasis. Let us begin with the Easternmost Bengali dialects. The conjunctive participles *giyā*, *gai* from the defective root *ga*, to go, "is often added to other verbs to make them more forcible." (L.S.I. Vol. I., p. 293). The conjunctive tense having been lost, the participle is added to inflected verbs in all tenses and moods as an emphatic particle; e.g. *dūrai bidesh gechil giyā*—went away to a distant country : Cachar dialect (L.S.I. V.I, p. 234). *lai gēcē gai* —took away : Tippera dialect (L.S.I. V., I., p. 244). *gelām gai*, I went away ; *deo gai*, give away : Chittagong : Ibid p. 294. *dūrai mullukē gel gai*—went away to a far country. *Kari goi*—let us make. *Noākhāli* : (Ibid, pp. 309, 313).

The use of *gai* in this sense is a highly characteristic feature of middle Assamese Prose of the Chronicles. The following forms are taken at random from *Purāṇi Asam Burāṇjī* published by the Kāmārūpa Anusandhān Samiti.

- dharile gai*—caught him up (p. 104)
- rahil gai*—he stayed there (p. 106)
- thākil gai*—he remained there (p. 107)
- bheṭile gai*—he met him (p. 109)
- diye gai*—he does give etc.

This use of *gai* persists in Mod. A. It is used in narrative prose to give a certain swing and a sense of finality to an expression.

* From *Bhāratīya Anushilan Granth*, dedicated in honour of Maṭāmahopādhyāya Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha, Prayag.

In standard Bengali *ge < giyā*, "added to the imperative expresses the imperative in the immediate future with a slight precativ sense" (O.D.B.L. p. 908) e.g. *āmi karige; tumi kara ge*. With the simple past and the future, it has the force of "though", "nevertheless", "however", "even now", "immediately" (O.D.B.L. p. 909). e.g. *se karle ge*—and then he did, *tumi kor be ge*, and you will do.

In middle and modern Assamese there is a similar use of the conjunctive *āhi* (coming; $\sqrt{āh}$. to come) $> hi$. e.g. *phuکانat baril-hi*—he took shelter in Phukan : *garh dilehi*—constructed a fort *Pāndu palehi*—reached Pāndu, etc.

This use of *hi* continues in Mod. A. There is just the difference between 'going' and 'coming' in the use of *gai an hi*. The former is used to indicate the consummation of the action of the verb further away from the speaker, while the latter denotes the contrary i.e. towards the direction of the speaker, e.g. *pāle gai*,—reached, going : *pāle hi*—reached, coming.

Some East Bengali dialects illustrate a similar use with $\pm kārī > hārī$, *āri*. e.g. *giyā hārī*, having gone : *Sylhet* (L.S.I. V. I. p. 231), where *hārī* is not pleonastic but continues the conjunctive sense of the preceding verb. The characteristic illustration is from the *Tippera dialect* (Ibid. p. 244) *bāper bāri getām āri*—went to the house of the father.

The standard Bengali pleonastic affix *khan*, *khun*, met with in expressions like *jābo-khan*, I shall go; *dilom—khun*, we gave; *habe--khun*, it will be (O.D.B.L. pp. 997, 998) though connected by Dr. Chatterji with O.I.A. *kṣana*, instant, is in reality a conjunctive participle occurring in the forms *khan*, *kohon*, *khan*, *khā* in the Bihari dialects.

Cf. *Pāch Parganiā* (L.S.I. V. II); *khāy kahan*, eating : *dhair-kahan*, catching : (P. 171); *uiṭh-kohon*, *uiṭh-kahan*, having risen : (P. 167); *Nāgpuriā* (Ibid. P. 298). *āi-kohon*, coming; *Sadri Kol* : *serāi-khan*, having completed; *kāmāi-khan*, having earned. (Ibid. PP. 159, 160); *Bhojpuri dialect*; *āwat-khā*, coming in. (Ibid. P. 206); also E. *Hindī-kan, -khan, -kehen* (L.S.I. VI. PP. 177, 178, 225).

As *Sadri Kol* where the exact form *khan* is registered is an Eastern Magadhan dialect and just in the immediate neighbourhood of Bengali the migration of *khan* is easily imaginable and a

postulate for separate origin of B. *khan* is uncalled for. The following expressions from the Gospel of St. Mark in Magadhi quoted in O.D.B.L. P 998 only illustrate the pleonastic use of the conjunctive participle *khan* in Magadhi : *Kariai-khan*, I do, I shall do; *Ailai-khan*, came; *Kahal kai-khan*, said etc ..

THE DIALECTICAL BENGALI—*ne*.

(*debo-ne*, I shall give; *jābā-ne*, you will go) and the dialectical Assamese (Kām̐rūp)-*ni* (*Khāwā-ni*, do eat; *jāwā-ni*, do go) are conjunctive endings used pleonastically.

The origin of the conjunctive participles in *na* in the various dialects and sub-dialects of N.I.A. may be briefly indicated here.

The forms in the *Bihari dialects* as above noted are *kahan*; *kohan*, *-khan*, *khā*.

The *Nepali* form is *kan* (shortened for *ke-ne*).

The Bengali sub-dialects (L.S.I., V. I) *Chakma*. P. 324.-*inai*; *jeinai*, having gone.

Kharia-Thar (Mānbhum), P 93.-*nā*; *henā*, being : *āna*, taking.

Mal Paharia, P 99. *-henak* : *guṭiāi-henak*, having collected.

Jalpai-guri, P 106. *-hāne* : *jāyā-hāne*, having gone.

In *Rajasthani dialects* : (L.S.I. IX.II)

Mārwarī P.. 26 *-nai*, *-knaī* :

Mālvi P 57. *-ne*, *-ī-ne*.

All these *n*-forms go back to O.I.A. (Vedic) *-tvāna* > M.I.A. *-ttāna*; *-ccāna*; *-yaṇa* (Pischell S. 592). M.I.A. *-yāṇa* N.I.A.—*āna*,—*na*.

Bihārī kahan; *Nep. kan* (<*ke-ne*); *Bengal; henak*, *hāne* are double Conjunctives. In the *Bihārī dialects* the termination of the conjunctive participle may be either *kai* or *ke* (shortened for *kari* > *ka(r)i*). In this use *kai* or *ke* lost all traces of the verbal significance and became a mere conjunctive suffix subjoined to the conjunctive form of the principal verb. The *Rāj.* dialects built up an affix in *-nai*, *ne* on the analogy of *kai*, *ke*.

By blending both the forms we get, *kai + na > haya na*, *kahan*, *kan*. The combination *kai + na* would also \rightarrow *kena*, *hena*, *henak*, with the addition of pleonastic *-ke*, (in some East B. dialects, *k* in the middle of a word, and the *k* in the verb *karib*, to do, is pronounced as *h*. Cf L.S.I. V.I. P. 259; *hariā dila = kariā dila* : Ibid P. 261).

The form in *-na* is the strengthening of *-na*; and *hane* may be derived from *ka* (often used instead of *ka*; L.S.I. V II. P.52) + *ana + i = kãne*, *hãne*.

The form in *-ina-i* is parallel to M.I.A. *-ūna* : *-ina* goes back to O.I.A. *-tcāna > tyāna* (Pischell S. 587) \leftarrow M.I.A. *-tiāna*; *-iāna* N.I.A. *-ina > -ina*.

DISGUISED CONJUNCTIVE FORMATIONS AS PLEONASTIC AFFIXES

The above discussions will throw light upon the origin of certain affixes tagged on to inflected verbal forms and so long regarded as pleonastic without any assignable reasons. It will be found that they are highly worn out conjunctive participles added on to emphasise the meaning of the principal verb. The following are the affixed verbal forms :-

Noakhali dialect (L.S.I. V.I.P. 307)

mari-(y)er :- I am dying.

kari-(y)er :- I do

Cf E.H. (Baigani). *maratha-nā*, I am dying, *jāthe-nā*, he goes.

Chittagong dialect (Ibid. P. 293)

kari-r : also *kari* - I do

kara-r : also *karas* - thou dost

kare-r : also *kare* - he does

khā-er : also *khār* - he eats.

Haïjong of Mymensingh (Ibid P. 215.)

mārib-ar : *mārib-ān*, he struck.

thākib-ār : *thākib-ān*, he remained.

Sylhet (Ibid. P. 226).

jāi- <i>yar</i>	}	I am going.
jāi- <i>r-ām</i>		
jāit- <i>r-ām</i>		

Early B. (*Krishna Kirtan*).

āche-r : he has. *beḥile-rá* : Surrounded

dibo-ra : shall give. *haibe-rá* : shall be.

geli-ra : passed.

In all these examples -*rá*, -*erá* have no clearly definable meaning. They are all used in a vague sense of emphasis and obligatoriness associated with English auxiliary verbs like 'do', 'did', 'shall', 'should', etc. and conveying the same shades of meaning as the conjunctive participles examined in the previous section.

In reality they are only decayed conjunctive participles. In Bihāri, there is also the conjunctive formation *kar* (L.S.I. V. II. p. 39) side by side with *kar*, *ke*. In the Western languages *kar* often appears as—*ar*. There is also the Nepali conjunctive in—(*y*) *er*, Eastern Hindī,—*ker* (Turnbull : Nepālī Gr. p III, L.S.I. V. VI p. 159).

We have already met expressions in East B. with pleonastic use of *hāri*, *āri* < *kari* (*getām āri*) and a Chittagong form like *khāi—r* may be regarded, as equivalent to *Khāi kar(i)*. I do it. Similarly, Noakhali *mari-ve* may be equated to *mari kar(i)*, I am dying. (The Māt Pāhāriā dialect has a verbal root $\sqrt{\text{ker}}$: Cf. *ānand kerib* : *hāsi-mōjā kerib* : L.S.I.V.I. p. 102)

Dr Chatterji regards this —*r*— as a contracted form of *kar* and a verbal auxiliary added on to the root (O.D.B.L. p. 996). But he has left the history and function of this —*r*— undiscussed.

INVERTED CONJUNCTIVES

There are certain anomalous formations in Early B. (*Krishna Kirtan*) and in Early A (*Rāmāyan*, M. Kandali) in which the position of the characteristic conjunctive ending has been inverted. The principal verb takes on the conjunctive termination and what in similar contexts pass on as conjunctive participles have personal affixes added on to them. The following are the examples ;

Early B. *dī—āra* : do give; *āni—āra* :
do bring; *Kahī—āra* : do speak ;
Khā—āra : do eat; *kahī—ārō* : I do speak.

Early A. *kari—era* : do thou go ;
tāri—erā : *māri—erā* : do save : kill etc.
lukāi—erō : I shall have concealed.
gucāi—erō : I shall have removed,
hāni—ere : he does strike. etc.,.

Here—*arā—erā* are clearly related to *karā*, *kerā* and the formations *dī—ārā*, *tāri—erā* may be equated to expressions like *diā kara*; *tārā*, *karā*—giving, do; saving, do,—give; do save. In this respect they may be regarded as compound verbs with the principal verbs put in the conjunctive forms. *āniārā* may be regarded as equivalent to Mod. B. *āniyā phela* : bring off. This use of—*arā*, *erā* may be due to the fact that though originally conjunctive in sense, they are used without the characteristic conjunctive terminations and were perhaps mistaken for finite verbs in the imperative. This motion once established, personal affixes of the other persons also were added on to them. Cf Western Assam (Kāmrup) dialectical forms :—*Khā n-i*, do thou eat; *khā-n-a*, do you eat; *khā-n-ō*, let me eat; where *-n-* is a conjunctive particle.

Dr Chatterji connects—*iā* with the verbal noun in *-ita* (O.D. B.L. S. 996). But the explanation suggested does not seem to be quite satisfactory.

[B] LETTERS

SOCIÉTÉ DE LINGUISTIQUE
DE PARIS
RECONNUE D'UTILITÉ PUBLIQUE
par décret du 30 mars 1876
A LA SORBONNE (5^e ARR.)

Paris, le 16.III.
1934

Dear Sir,

Today is mail day, so I answer at once ; all the more as having no copy of your work, the things I can tell you are of a general nature, and must be those I have expressed in my report. I wish you would read it, in case there are details : is it not customary with your people to have reports communicated to the candidates ?

From what I remember the main blemishes in your work were, so to say, of an elementary nature, in so far as some training in etymology, or historical phonetics would have prevented you from offering a lot of rash guesses which subtract too much of the value of your work—a work which is in itself useful, new, and worthy of appreciation. This question of phonetics is fundamental, as morphology has to be founded on phonetics ; no explanation of any suffix or desinence etc. has to be offered without being supported by the phonetical rules of the language. In your work (and I must say not only in yours ; but in yours eminently) there is not enough of interdependency and coherency of the different parts ; to feel yourself obliged to proving your statements will oblige you also to leave a lot aside (or to admit borrowings to Bg. or Hindi), but what will remain will be solid stuff.

Another thing : from your title I gathered you did not consider yourself bound to be complete, and give one more full "Formation", or "Origin and development" ; perhaps you will be now induced to keep only some parts, where the matter is new ; this I should not consider a defect, on the contrary. But you are a better judge of the matter.

In due time please write to me again, and send me at least parts of your new Ms. (By the way, please inquire about the foreign tariffs of postage ; I had to pay a fine for your letter). But at all

events. Dr. Chatterji will be an excellent guide, even if he and I do not agree on every point; perhaps you are also in touch with Dr. Shahidullah, whom I had some years ago the privilege of counting as a pupil. And don't speak of humility; we are co-students.

Yours sincerely,
Jules Bloch *

If you admit Assamese is a dialect of Bengali, you ought always to start from Bengali or old Bengali. If not, you ought always start from a reconstructed common form. But it is now useless to start from Sanskrit; one may only allude to it, for pedagogical reasons, if I may say so. Excuse haste and bad handwriting.

PARIS
GARE MONTPARNASSE
19. XII. 1934

20. XII. 34.

Dear Mr. Kakati,

A word in haste. I just received your thesis; the letter and M.O. (for which I add thanks) had come before. I hope I shall find some time during the X'Mas holidays to go, at least in part, through your Ms. I shall write you a little later. Excuse my hurry.

Yours sincerely
Jules Bloch

***Dr Jules Bloch** : Eminent linguist and author of *La Formation de la Langue Marathe* (1920). He was one of the examiners of Kakati's thesis, *Assamese, Its Formation and Development*.

INSTITUT
DE
CIVILISATION
INDIENNE
SORBONNE

16 me Maurice Bertriaux
Leores 29.XII.34

Dear Mr. Kakati,

I have managed to go through your book during the Holidays. I have put pencil remarks on the blank pages, as recommended. You will see that I have doubts on many points ; but the whole has improved much, and contains no more of those shocking remarks or etymologies which struck me at the first time. Of course, not speaking of differences on special points, where you could often fall back on Dr. Chatterji's support, I would probably not have taken the subject as you did ; I should have started, not from O.I.A. and if possible not from M.I.A., but from the form of the language (to be reconstructed) from which Bg. and Ass. (& Or. ?) are derived ; or if you think that Ass. is derived, not parallel to Bg., but from O. Bg. itself (not speaking of possible or probable recent borrowings), I should have tried to start from Bg., Bg. being generally sufficiently well explained through the bulky book of Dr. Chatterji. You have not even expressed your view of the matter, either in Introduction or Conclusion ; and it cannot be gathered from your treatment of facts ; on the whole you rather consider Ass. as isolated—a view, which, being contrary to that expressed e.g. by Grierson, should be defended.

As to the title 'Aspects' is obscure to me ; but I suppose it would imply unconnected studies ; as a matter of fact, your treatment is complete enough and, on principle at least (see remarks), connected. So that 'Outlines of Ass. Linguistics' seems better. There is probably another formula to be found yet, of which yourself, of course, will be a better judge.

Of course, no index at the present time at least ; a sufficiently detailed table is quite enough.

In conclusion accept my congratulations for the hard preliminary work done & for the improvement of the treatment ; and my promise of acceptance of the thesis, if it is again submitted to me.

Yours sincerely
Jules Bloch.

In case you write to him give my best regards to Dr. Chatterji.

RATHFARNHAM
CAMBERLEY,
SURREY

Telephone
43, Camberley.

July 27th 1931

Dear Sir,

Pray accept my hearty thanks for your kindness in contributing that important essay on "Formative Affixes in Assamese" to the commemoration Volume now being issued under the auspices of the Linguistic Society of India. I have read it with the greatest interest, and all students of Indian languages will be grateful to you for the light you have thrown on a subject hitherto little studied.

As some time must necessarily elapse before the volume can be printed, Mr. Woolner has been good enough to let me see it in its manuscript form, so that I have had the privilege of reading, and admiring, your paper before its publication.

I cannot tell you how deeply I am touched by this token of affection from my friends and fellow-workers, and how unworthy I feel of all the kindly learning that has been lavished upon me.

Yours very sincerely

George A. Grierson *

Banikanta Kakati, Esq.
Cotton College,
Gauhati,
Assam, India.

***Sir George Abraham Grierson**, KCIE, Ph.D, D.Litt, LL.D.
ICS : Eminent linguist ; Editor of the monumental *Linguistic Survey of India*.

RATHFARNHAM
CAMBERLEY
SURREY

Telephone
43, Camberley

January 19th 1932

Professor Banikanta Kakati,

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for your letter of December 29th 1931, and for the accompanying paper on "Aspects of Assamese Morphology", both of which arrived today. You will, I am sure, forgive me for not reading the latter, when I explain that. Since I last wrote to you, my eyesight has been failing, and all reading and writing has been reduced to a minimum. To read your paper would be quite beyond my powers, even though the subject is one in which I am much interested, and on which you can throw so much illumination. I must accept the conditions of old age, and hope that my eyes will ultimately improve in strength.

Under the circumstances, I think it is best to return the paper to you. I doubt if its subject would be considered of sufficient general interest for the pages of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, I would suggest its being submitted for consideration to the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, which when I was in India, frequently published papers on grammatical details of Indian languages. Unfortunately, as I have explained, I can offer no opinion regarding, or criticism of, your conclusions, as I have not been able to read it.

I am very sorry to be compelled to disappoint you.

Yours very sincerely

George A. Grierson.

**School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London, W.C. 1**

RLT/APB/1146

Telephone Number : Museum 2023/4
Telegrams : SOASUL, PHONE LONDON
30th June, 1948.

Dear Dr. Kakati,

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of your "The Mother Goddess Kāmākhya." I have read it with much interest. The fusion of Aryan with the primitive beliefs of Assam presents a fascinating study. I wish very much that similar studies could be made in other parts of the Indo-Aryan area.

Yours sincerely

R. L. Turner*From **J. H. Hutton**

33, MILLINGTON ROAD,
CAMBRIDGE
Tel. 56022

July 13th 1948

Dear Professor Kakati,

I write to thank you very much for sending me your book on **The Mother Goddess Kamakhya**. I shall read it with interest and profit, and I am very glad indeed to have a copy in my library.

With many thanks again, I am

Yours sincerely

J. H. Hutton**

***Dr. R. L. Turner** : Eminent linguist; author of *Nepali-English Dictionary* (1931).

****Dr. J. H. Hutton**, D. Sc, I.C.S : Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills; also, Professor of Anthropology, St. Catherine's College, Cambridge University. He is widely known for his works on Naga life and culture.

TELEPHONE
WESTERN 6265

52 COLCHESTER DRIVE
KELVINSIDE,
GLASGOW, W. 2.

4.9.35

Dear Dr. Kakati,

My warmest congratulations, in which my wife joins, on your well-earned distinction ! A letter from Annada Babu, received last mail, brought the welcome news. I shall hope to see your thesis some day in print. It has been a long and a toilsome journey for you, I know, and it is immediately to your credit that you have pushed on to success in spite of circumstances which were not always encouraging. I trust this finds you and yours in good health.

I hear the enrolment is up to 860 this year. I have not heard how many ladies ; but I hope they are also up in numbers. I see from the "Times of Assam" that the University question is very much to the fore again. Your doctorate is a quiet but hopeful sign. I trust, however, the prior claims of primary and secondary education will not be forgotten.

We have had quite a good summer here this year and I have seen more of my own country in the past two months than ever before. It is lovely. Remember me to all my old colleagues. My thoughts are often in Assam.

Yours sincerely
David Thomson*

Woodcock
Nutley
Sussex
Nov 1st, 35

Dear Dr. Kakati

I read in 'The Collegean' of your great success in obtaining the Doctorate in Philosophy of the Calcutta University and send you my very heartiest congratulations on your personal honour and on the honour you have conferred upon the College.

***Dr. David Thomson**, B.Sc., Ph.D. IES : Joined as Lecturer at Cotton College, Gauhati, in 1911; later, succeeded F.W. Sudmersen as the Principal of the college (1926-33).

I trust that the long and arduous labours and study that such an attainment called for has brought you all the pleasure and satisfaction that you desire and I trust you will find scope for the utilisation of the special knowledge you have acquired to your own personal advantage and to that of Assam.

Yours with best wishes

F. W. Sudmersen*

D.O. No.

Office of the Director of Public
Instruction, Assam

Seal : Assam Administration

Shillong, the 23-7-1915.

Dear Banikanta,

I have not been able to award you one of the Postgraduate scholarships. . . .

In the special circumstances of your case however, I have decided to help you myself with an allowance of Rs. 25 a month, and send you herewith a cheque for Rs. 110, which, with the Rs. 40 I have already given you, provides for the first six months.

If you will remind me about the beginning of December I shall send you an instalment for the next 6 months.

I am enquiring of the Principal as to the possibility of your being granted a free studentship.

I hope you will work steadily and do yourself credit in the M.A.

Yours sincerely

J. R. Cunningham.**

***Frederic William Sudmersen** : First Principal of Cotton College, Gauhati, from 1901 till his retirement in 1926.

****John Richard Cunningham** : Director of Public Instruction, Assam, (1913-31). The good work that he did for Assam has almost been forgotten, while he is still remembered by many as the author of a 'notorious' circular, requiring parents and guardians to stand surety for the good conduct of their children and wards in the wake of the freedom struggle. His letters here reveal his sincere good will toward Kakati.

Camp
19 Dec., 1915

My dear Sir,

I take the opportunity of the Xmas season to send you good wishes for your studies and happiness in 1916, with a cheque for your allowance for the second half year.

Yours sincerely
J.R. Cunningham.

Sj. Banikanta Kakati
Presidency College.

4 Feb., 1917

Shillong,
Assam.

Dear Banikanta Kakati,

I am very sorry indeed to hear that you have been unwell and hope to hear shortly that you have recovered.

I am afraid I have been remiss in sending your allowance or you have been remiss in not reminding me. I now send you a cheque for Rs. 150. For the moment I have mislaid my previous Cheque Book and do not know up till what month this will carry you....Please let me know.

You must take exercise and give yourself some recreation. It does not do to brood constantly over books.

Good wishes for your success.

Yours sincerely,
J. R. Cunningham

I have crossed the cheque for safety. You will be able however to get it cashed through Mr. Wordsworth.

23 March, 1917

Shillong
Assam

Dear Banikanta Kakati,

I am very sorry to hear of your breakdown in health. You should take sound medical advice. Consult Mr. Wordsworth, showing him this letter and he will, I am sure, arrange that you are in the first place thoroughly examined by the Hostel Doctor and, if necessary, by such other authority as may be indicated. It would probably do you good to have your eyes thoroughly and accurately tested: a student's breakdown is often due, although he may have no suspicion of it, to this cause. If there are charges to meet which you cannot afford, I shall be ready to do what is necessary.

A retirement to your village and to the peace of life in the countryside would probably do good to your health and might be without disadvantage to your studies if you are made of the proper stuff....It may however be considered later whether you would be better to spend next year in retirement or in the Cotton College, or in Calcutta.

Yours sincerely,
J. R. Cunningham

13 May, 1917

Shillong
Assam

Dear Banikanta Kakati,

I am not sure if I answered your letter of 3rd April which told me of your ill health and the failure of your plans.

Your health I hope is now restored.

For next year, you'd better, I think, join the Cotton College and study under Mr. Goffin. If you will remind me, I shall send you the usual six monthly remittance at the beginning of the Cotton College session.

Yours sincerely
J. R. Cunningham

Shillong

27th May, 1917

Dear Banikanta Kakati,

I am afraid I cannot answer the question whether if you join the Cotton College, it will be possible for you to appear at the M.A. examination as a Presidency College student. . . . Nor can I see that it is of the slightest importance.

It is satisfactory that your health is improving.

Yours sincerely

J. R. Cunningham

Seal :

Government of India

Shillong

19 June 1917

Dear Banikanta Kakati,

I send you herewith a remittance of Rs. 150 in payment of your first six months' allowance at Cotton College—1st July to 31st December, 1917.

Immediately you get to Gauhati and enter yourself as an inmate of the College Hostel, you should state your case fully to the medical officer of the Hostel and follow his advice with the greatest care.

I am sorry to hear that your recovery is proceeding so slowly.

Yours sincerely,

J. R. Cunningham

Shillong

Assam

13th Jan. 1918

Dear Banikanta Kakati,

With every good wish for the new year, I send you a cheque for Rs. 150 to help to cover your expenses for the term which has now begun.

yours sincerely

J. R. Cunningham

Shillong
5th June, 1918

My dear Banikanta Kakati,

By all means apply.... Whether you have any chance of success or not I cannot say.. It is possible that the Administration will be prepared to postpone appointment until after the results of the M.A. examinations are out. You should then have a good enough chance if you are successful and are graded in the First Class.

I sincerely hope you will do yourself credit in the examination.

Yours sincerely
J. R. Cunningham

Seal :

Government of Inida

19 Nov., 1918

Dear Banikanta Kakati,

I am glad to have your letter and to know that you are starting work in the right spirit.

You will remember that you have still, before you can be confirmed, to pass the Doctor's. I wish to advise you to take particular care of your health and not to abandon yourself to work and to study in such wise as to neglect your body.

You should take regular exercise—not merely walking which is of no great avail. There are systems both Indian and European which provide for the exercise of all the muscles of the body. Ten or fifteen minutes daily is all that is required.

I send you every good wish for your health and happiness in the Cotton College,

Yours sincerely
J. R. Cunningham

D.O. No. 336

Seal :

Government of Assam.

Office of the Director of Public
Instruction, Assam.
Shillong, Sept. 13th, 1923

My dear Sir,

I have received your letter and wish you good fortune in your examination in the B group. I trust you will either get a first class ranking or fail. A second or third class is not worth having.

Your pamphlet on Sankar Deb is interesting and is respectably written. This however I suggest may be an object with you as a Professor of English—to write English that he who reads may not be able to classify your writing as Indian English. That this is not impossible I know from the success of students of my own—notably one Seshadri of Benares University who writes English with only an occasional lapse from grace.

If you call with your pamphlet when next I halt for some days at Gauhati I shall endeavour to give you guidance.

Yours sincerely
J. R. Cunningham

Shillong,
23 Dec., 1923

Dear Banikanta Kakati,

Your letter has given me great pleasure and I congratulate you cordially on your distinguished success.

With the season's greetings.

Yours sincerely
J. R. Cunningham

5 Feby. 1933

ASKOMIL END,
CAMPBEL TOWN,
ARGYLL.
TEL : CAMPBELTOWN 167.

My dear Banikanta,

I was very pleased to hear from you again and have to thank you for your good wishes which I cordially return in kind.

It is more than kind of you to wish to dedicate some scholarly production to me. I shall be delighted to have my name associated with any work of the kind which you publish.

I hope that the verdict on your thesis may be favourable and that some measure of renown may come to you in academic circles from its publication. You will, of course, send a copy to Sir Dr. Grierson and may be sure of generous appreciation from him for any truth which you are the first to bring to light.

I am sorry that the College is losing its M.A. affiliation—it was a feather in its cap—and very sorry indeed for M. Abraham who will not, I hope, be long in getting another appointment. Should he be still with you when this arrives, will you convey to him a message of sympathy from me.

I am bound to say that the Assam Valley did not react at all eagerly to the advanced affiliation. And in hard times there was nothing for it, I suppose, but that its affiliation should go....

You ask how I am spending my days. Idly, I am afraid, but happily. Idly and industriously, if one can be both idle and industrious. My days are full of occupation. But I am not occupied against the grain, or to any very useful purpose. In this Northern land, the sun sets early in the winter time and we have long evenings. I spend them happily, reading and writing, content for the present that I have no files to dispose of or disagreeable problems to brood about. The daylight hours are spent mostly out of doors, gardening, botanizing, playing with geology, and, occasionally, golfing.... It may be that after my mind has lain fallow for a year or two, I may plough up the lea and try to become productive again. ...I don't know....Meanwhile I am content.

I hope your health is good and that you are continuing to find happiness in your public and private work.

Sincerely yours,
J. R. Cunningham

C.R.

No. Stamp :
GAUHATI
1 SEP. 35
G.T.O.

INDIAN POSTS AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT
DF OF (14.30) 925 CAMPBELTOWN P.O. 31 IRC 7
LC PROFESSOR KAKATI, GAUHATI
WARMEST CONGRATULATIONS

CUNNINGHAM

RECD HERE AT 7.12.

[The sequence of entries at the beginning of this telegram is—class of telegram, time handed in, serial number (in the case of foreign telegrams only), office of origin, date, service instructions (if any) and number of words.]

24 Sept., 35

ASKOMIL END,
CAMPBELTOWN,
ARGYLL.

TEL : CAMPBELTOWN 167.

My dear Banikanta,

On receipt of your letter of 7th Aug. I cabled you my congratulations. I refrained from following up with a letter as I was not sure whether or not I was coming out to India again in the cold weather.....Now, it seems that I am to take up the yoke again.I shall hope to see you in Gauhati or Shillong and to get all your news.

Again congratulations.

Sincerely yours

J. R. Cunningham

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

Assam Secretariat
Shillong, 20th Novr. 1935

My dear Banikanta,

I have received your letter of 19th November and hope that you will be able to arrange for the printing and publication of your Thesis.

I expect to be in Gauhati shortly and shall look forward to seeing you there.

Yours sincerely

J. R. Cunningham

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

Assam Secretariat
Shillong, 21st Novr., 1935

My dear Banikanta,

I wonder if I might trouble you for a brief note on the Assamese-Bengali language question, in so far as it affects the University issue which is being discussed.

You are yourself bilingual. Will you consider and advise whether Bengali speakers would be put to any serious disadvantage by having to listen to lessons or lectures in Assamese and *vice versa*.

Yours sincerely
J. R. Cunningham

Campbeltown,
Argyll,
7 April, 1941.

My dear Banikanta,

The receipt of your telegram was a very great pleasure. I wish to congratulate you on the completion of your important work and to thank you for the honour which you have done me by dedicating it to me. It warms the heart to find oneself remembered in such loyal and friendly fashion after so many years.

I hope that you are writing to me, telling me of yourself and your own affairs and that your news, when it comes, will be good news....My own tidings are not so satisfactory except in this that my health is good and that like everyone else here I look forward confidently to a happy outcome of this miserable contest. Meantime, my house and most of my possessions have been destroyed. We have found a temporary home for a few months and hope that before that period expires, a friendly chance may provide us with a more permanent abode. *

Will you give my good wishes and friendly greetings to all my friends at the Cotton College.

Again with thanks and with kindest remembrances.

Sincerely yours
J. R. Cunningham

* **Cunningham** died in 1944 at campbeltown in Argyleshire, Scotland, in consequence of an aerial attack by Germany during World War II.

D.O. No:

Seal :

Office of the Director of
Public Instruction, Assam,
Shillong 8th August, 1935.

Dear Dr. Kakati,

I have much pleasure in congratulating you most heartily on your being awarded a Doctorate by Calcutta University. It is a fitting return for the brilliant work you have been doing on Assamese Literature and culture. I hope that you will be able to continue your work for many years to come, and bring further honours to the Cotton College and to Assam.

Kindest regards.

Yours sincerely

G. A. Small *

SEAL :

UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA
ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING
D.O. No. 258.

SENATE HOUSE
CALCUTTA

13th August, 1935.

Dear Dr. Kakati,

Thank you very much for your letter. May I congratulate you personally on your success? I have no doubt you will continue your higher studies and bring credit to your University and to your province.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- S. P. Mukherji **

***G. A. Small** : Succeeded J. R. Cunningham as Director of Public Instruction, Assam.

****Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji** : Noted educationist and politician : he was Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University and an eminent Member of Parliament.

O QA CALCUTTA C 5
 PROFESSOR BHUBONMOHAN SEN GAUHATI
 KAKATI AWARDED DOCTORATE
 CONGRATULATIONS
 MOOKERJEE

My dear Dr. Kakati,

Here is the telegram with the V.C.'s congratulations. You will reply to it.

I had the honour of reading the telegram out before the vast gathering. I wish you were in the meeting to see the wild delirium of joy which swayed the whole house which cheered for 5 mts. The same enthusiasm burst forth when I just added, "I would not have been happier if an Assamese were made the governor of a Province." With the Principal's consent a Motor Car with Indu Babu was sent to bring you to the meeting, but you were not to be found. It looked like the play of Hamlet with Hamlet's part left out; but perhaps 'Hamlet' wilfully kept out. Wonderful man you are !!! How could you resist the temptation of enquiring at mine about the V.C.'s reply?

More of it when we meet next.

Yours,
B. M. Sen * 5/8

SEAL
 VICEREGAL LODGE, SIMLA

By Command
 of
 HIS MAJESTY THE KING—EMPEROR
 The accompanying Medal is forwarded
 to
 Dr. Banikanta Kakati
 to be worn in commemoration of
 Their Majesties' Coronation
 12th May, 1937.

***Professor Bhubanmohan Sen** : Taught history at Cotton College from 1911 to 1942. He co-authored, with Professor R.C. Goffin, *Stories from Assamese History*, (O.U.P.).

[C] Review of Mother Goddess Kamakhya

The sources of the history of Assam are poor; in fact in epigraphy, there are only seven inscriptions from seven periods; for the rest, Puranic literature—fragmentary and legendary. One is not surprised that the author announces at the outset the absence of conclusion in this little book where he has reprinted these various articles; even the coherence he makes us expect is lacking here.

One is yet grateful to the author for his analysis, for the problem is important, and cannot be studied elsewhere than in the frontier provinces of India: it is that of Indianisation, and that of the adaptation of Hinduism to the local traditions and customs. If the interpretation of the literary sources is doubtful, and the etymology of proper nouns risky (one knows that it is the same when the well-known civilisations and languages are concerned), the comparison of Hinduised Assam with primitive Assam and even with other Indo-Chinese regions (but the Egypt and Japan also invoked by the author are doubtless too far-off) has a good explanatory value. *

*Review of *Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā* by Jules Bloch, originally published in the French journal *Comptes Rendus*, 1949 (English rendering by Dr. Hiren Gohain).

The Contributors

PART I

Professor Krishna Kanta Handiqui (1898-1982) : A renowned contemporary of Dr. Banikanta Kakati, the late Handiqui was the first Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University (1948-1957). His fame as a Sankritist rests chiefly on three learned works, *Naiṣadhacarita*, *Yaśastilaka* and *Indian culture and Setubandha*.

Dr. Praphulladatta Goswami : Retired Professor of Folklore and Dean of the faculty of Arts, Gauhati University, Dr. Goswami has significant contributions to Assamese scholarship to his credit. *Asamīyā Jana-Sāhitya*, *Ballads and Tales of Assam*, *Songs and Tales of North-Eastern India*, *Manik Chandra Barua* (biography) and *Kēca Pātar Kāpani* (a novel) are some of his publications.

Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya : One of the foremost creative writers of contemporary Assam, and now Vice-President, Sahitya Akademi, Dr. Bhattacharyya is a winner of the prestige Jnanpith Award for his novel *Mrityunjay*. He has also been a journalist, and once edited the epoch-making literary monthly *Rāmdhenu* for more than a decade. *Rājpathhe Ringiyāy*, *Yaruṅgam*, *Pratipad* and *Kālar Humuniya* are some others of his contributions to Assamese fiction.

Dr. Hiren Gohain : Professor and Head of the Department of English, Gauhati University, Dr. Gohain is a leading contemporary critic of literature and society. *Tradition and Paradise Lost* (his doctoral dissertation for Cambridge University), *Sāhityar Satya*, *Samāj āru Samālocanā* and *Sāhitya āru Cetanā* are among his major publications.

PART II

Dr. Maheswar Neog : Retired Jawaharlal Nehru Professor in the Assamese Department of Gauhati University and Saint Sankardeva Professor of Religion Punjabi University, Patiala, Dr. Neog is well-known for his prolific scholarship. A leading light in the field of research in Assam, he has written extensively on Assamese life, culture and literature and has also edited several celebrated texts. *Sankardeva and His Times*, *Prācyā Śāsanavaī*, *Asamīyā Sāhityar Rūprekhā*, *Sattriyā Nritya āru Sattriyā Nrityar Tāl*, *Guru-Corit Kathā* (Edited), *Arunodai* (Edited), *Gita-Gobinda* (Co-edited) are among his major contributions.

Dr. Debi Prasad Pattanayak : Director, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, Dr. Pattanayak is a leading linguistic scientist of present-day India.

Shri Tabu Taid : Former Professor of English, Cotton College, Guwahati, Shri Taid is presently an educational administrator.

Shri Bisweswar Hazarika : Lecturer in Assamese, B. Barooah College, Guwahati, Shri Hazarika is known as a thorough student of the Assamese language.

Dr. Upendra Nath Goswami : Retired Professor of Assamese, Gauhati University, Dr. Goswami has contributed significantly to dialectological studies in Assam. *Bhāṣāviññān*, *Bhāṣā āru Sāhitya*, *Asam-iyā Bhāṣār Rūpkathā* and *A Study of Kāmrupi - A Dialect of Assamese* are among his publications.

Dr. Sukumar Biswas : Professor and Head of the Department of Bengali and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Gauhati University, Dr. Biswas is a comparative philologist and has published a good deal in various research journals.

Dr. Pramod Chandra Bhattacharyya : Retired Principal, B. Barooah College, Guwahati, Dr. Bhattacharyya is a well-known linguist of Assam. He has contributed especially to the study of Bodo, a Tibeto-Barman language.

Dr. Dilip Barua : Professor (and former Head), Department of English, Burdwan University, West Bengal, Dr. Barua is known for his critical writings in Assamese and English.

Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma : Retired Rabindranath Tagore Professor of Modern Indian Languages, Gauhati University, Dr. Sarma is a leading critic and historian of Assamese literature. *Asamīyā Sāhityar Itibṛtta*, *Asamīyā Upanyāsar Bhūmika*, *Asamīyā Upanyāsar Gatidhārā* and *Asamīyā Nātya Sāhitva* are among his major works.

Shri Hirendranath Dutta : Reader, Department of English, Gauhati University, Shri Dutta is a poet and a writer. His poems have been collected under the title *Somdhirir Sōwarāṇi*.

Shri Upendra Nath Sarma : Retired Professor and Head of the Department of English, Cotton College, Guwahati, Shri Sarma is a keen student of English language and literature. He has many critical essays on literary themes to his credit.

Dr. Sivanath Barman : Lecturer in Physics, Arya Vidyapith College, Guwahati, Dr. Barman is now well-entrenched amongst the younger generation of writers in Assam. *Einstein āru Padārtha Bigyān*, *Na Manuṣyāt*, *Anveṣā*, *Loka Kṛṣṭir Utsa* and *Srīmanṭa Sankardev* are among his publications.

PART III.

Dr. Mukunda Madhava Sarma : Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Gauhati University, also Visiting Professor of Udayana University in Bali, Indonesia (1984-86), Dr. Sarma is a well-known Sanskritist. His publications include *Dhvani Theory in Sanskrit Poetics*, *Inscriptions of Assam*, *Vyañjana Prapañca Samikṣa* (in Sanskrit) and *Upamā Kālidāsasya* (in Assamese).

Dr. Bhuban Mohan Das : Professor of Anthropology, Gauhati University, Dr. Das is one of the senior Physical Anthropologists in India and has published a large number of research papers and notes in various journals in India and abroad. He has also published several books in Assamese on anthropological topics.

Dr. Prafulla Kotoky : Reader in English, Gauhati University, Dr. Kotoky has several publications on literary themes to his credit including *Indo-English Poetry*, *Swarājottar Asamīyā Upanyās* and *Kramabikāṣat Asamīyā Gadyasoili*.

Dr. Gobinda Prasad Sarma : Reader in English, Gauhati University, Dr. Sarma writes critical essays and short stories. *Nationalism in Indo-Anglian Fiction*, *Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya : Oupanyāsik* and *Jivanī āru Asamīyā Jivanī* are among his publications.

Shri Munin Barkataki : A noted writer, Shri Barkataki is known for his incisive critical writings. He also wrote short stories in his earlier years. *Bismṛta Byatikram* is a collection of his biographical essays.

(The articles written by Dr. S.K. Chatterji, Prof. P.C. Roy—both Kakati's teachers—and Dr. Robert Shafer are reproductions).

—Editors

If Sankaradeva contributed to the spread of oriental culture and literature four centuries back by building up a massive renaissance, based on the Visnulte faith, and introduced India to Assam in depth, Bankanta Kakati was one of the few persons who acted up to the revival of that legacy, which still holds the eastern zone to India. He established the identity and uniqueness of the Assamese language, obtaining it scientifically for a study by linguists of the world and his work would be of supreme importance when the future worker takes up the study of the comparative and historical grammar of the Indo-Aryan tongues.

Maheswar Neog